INDIGENOUS INDIANS

AGASTYA TO AMBEDKAR

KOENRAAD ELST

In independent India, a lot has already been written about national integration and the need to combat separatist tendencies. Unfortunately, much of it is superficial repetition of false slogans (from the secularist side) or sterile lamentations (from the Hindu side). With this book, I hope to add some depth and some frankness to our understanding of the problems of both social and territorial separatism in India.

Today, like in 1947, the single biggest separatist threat comes from Islam. After Pakistan and Kashmir, we are now confronted with preparations for the islamization of the areas surrounding Bangladesh. This book is not specifically concerned with the roots of Islamic separatism, a large subject on which essential information has already been provided in other *Voice of India* publications. But we have dealt with Islamic doctrine and history in the context of the equality debate: has Hindu society been more oppressive of its lower layers than other societies, and is Hinduism intrinsically more unjust than other cultures? Claims of social equality as a result of a religion's doctrine are nowadays often made on behalf of Christianity and Islam, as of Buddhism and Virashaivism and even of Vedism. These claims are generally untrue, but nowhere as grossly as in the case of Islam.

This book deals more specifically with forms of ethnic, or mostly pseudo-ethnic separatism. Indeed, important social categories like caste and speech community are currently being misconstrued as ethnic and even racial categories: the Dravidian race overpowered by the Aryan race, the aboriginal pre-Aryans reduced to low-castes by the Aryan invaders. In reality, from Agastya to Ambedkar, great Indians have been living refutations of this ethnic cleavage of India; Agastya was an ancient Vedic *rishi* living among the Dravidians (his name is also claimed to have a Dravidian etymology), while Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was the modern leader of the lowest castes as well as an articulate opponent of the ethnic and racial explanation of caste. The false ethnic redefinition of the components of the Indian nation serves to make full use of the current vogue of aboriginal revival and ethnic pride in implementing strategies aimed at the fragmentation of Hindu society. Christian and secularist interests are concentrating their efforts on denying the historical, cultural unity of India and redefining it as a prison-house of nations.

This book contains some strong criticism of Church and missionary policies. For me personally, formulating this criticism has not been easy. I have missionaries in my family, and in a sociological sense, I am a member of the Catholic community in my country. Therefore, some of this will not go down well with people near and dear to me. Criticizing Islam is simple, criticizing

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ISBN 81-85990-04-2
Rs. 150

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KOENRAAD ELST

VOICE OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

First published, 1993

ISBN 81-85990-04-2

All correspondence to:
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P.O. Box 103
3000 LEUVEN 3
Belgium

Published by Voice of India, 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi – 110 002
and printed at Crecsent Printing Works (Pvt.) Ltd.,
P–14, Connaught Circus, New Delhi – 110 001

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sionary policies. For me personally, formulating this criticism has not been easy. I have missionaries in my family, and in a sociological sense, I am a member of the Catholic community in my country. Therefore, some of this will not go down well with people near and dear to me. Criticizing Islam is simple, criticizing Christianity is more complicated, because my own relation with it is more complex, and because Christianity itself is a more complex doctrine and movement than Islam. However, Christianity in India is not the toothless, softened Christianity which I am familiar with, but has retained the aggressiveness and self-righteousness of the colonial period; and even the European Churches become a little bit aggressive again when advertising their work among the wretched Pagans of India. Therefore, I see no reason to mince words and to spare the Chrstian establishment when it comes to exposing its divisive and subversive role.

Nowadays, most writings on the religio-political situation in India contain comparisons of contemporary phenomena with Nazism and Fascism. References to Hitler are a mighty weapon, an easy way to kill opponents in debate, and to kill debate itself. As it is, in this book I myself will compare some movements with Nazism, some people with Hitler. I will not, as happens too often, reduce them to *only* this Nazi-like aspect which I claim to perceive in them; but even then, the comparison is bound to have a disproportionate rhetorical power. At any rate, it is not me who started the inflation of Hitler comparisons and Nazi allegations which is hampering the debate on the Indian religio-political conflicts and social institutions. It is the enemies of Hindu society, and their poorly informed pupils, who have introduced this heavy and extreme terminology; they are not in a position to complain when they get a taste of their own medicine.

The topics dealt with in this book, from anti-Brahmanism to the continuity between Hindu and tribal culture, deserve a much more thorough study. Hindu scholars should come forward to investigate India's history anew, free from the anti-Hindu bias which has dominated the field for several centuries now. Hindu conceptual categories should be revaluated, Hindu sources of history should no longer be dismissed out of hand (the way the Puranas had been declared inadmissible). I hope this book will prove to be an encouragement for such fresh research.

Leuven, Spring Equinox 1993 KOENRAAD ELST

ONE

AN OUTSIDER LOOKS AT THE ARYANS

1.1. The ugly Aryans

In the late 18th century, after the kinship of the "Indo-European" languages was discovered, European scholars assumed that India had been the source land (*Urheimat*) of this language family, and even of much of European as well as Mesopotamian culture.[1] During the 19th century, the supposed source land was gradually moved westwards, and various European countries, from Russia to Denmark, claimed the honour for themselves. This implied that the presence of the Indo-European (then often called *Aryan*) languages in India had to be explained through an "Aryan Invasion" from the West.

Initially, these Aryan invaders were pictured as bringers of civilization (which they shared with the Europeans) to a backward country. But after the discovery of the ruins of the Indus civilization (Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro) in the 1920s, the scenario was altered sharply: the Aryans became the barbarians who had destroyed (or at best, who had for many centuries not been able to equal) the earlier civilization of the Harappans. The Aryans became the bad guys. Their Sanskrit language, their Brahminical priesthood, their Vedic religion, came to be described as primitive and as foreign impositions on India.

All kinds of divisive forces have jumped on the Aryan Invasion theory as the perfect tool to cut slices out of Hindu society and out of the Indian state. This theory became the basis of attempts to pit "Dravidians" against "Aryans", high castes against low castes, tribals against mainstream Hindus, Vedic orthodoxy "imposed by the foreign invader" against heterodox sects "which emerged as a native reaction against the Aryan occupiers". It was also used to neutralize Hindu criticism of the Islamic occupation, as "Hindus themselves have entered the same way the Muslims have". Till today, Christian, Islamic, Marxist and "secularist" forces continue to promote the theory and make propagandistic capital out of it.

[1] The first suspicion of a common Indo-European language family had already surfaced in the 16th century, but it became common knowledge only after Sir William Jones had presented Sanskrit as an older and in many ways superior sister of Latin and Greek.

Western scholars have not felt motivated to question the dominant theory which their predecessors had established. Indian scholars have raised some objections, but often their case was poorly presented, and their findings have not even come to their Western colleagues' notice. Hardly aware of the political meaning this theory had acquired in India, the Western orientalists saw neither scholarly nor ethical reasons to re-check the Aryan Invasion theory and to explore alternative hypotheses. The result is that nearly all relevant books and school manuals present the Aryan Invasion theory as a firmly established fact. Non-specialists accept it without questioning, and some of them have voiced some far-reaching conclusions which can be drawn from the theory with impeccable logic.

A representative case of those innocent outsiders who have thrown themselves into the exploration of the farthest implications of the Aryan Invasion theory, is the Belgian *hatha yoga* teacher and self-appointed India lover, André Van Lysebeth. In his book *Tantra, le Culte de la Féminité* (French: "Tantra, the Cult of Womanhood"), he devotes several chapters to a zesty exposition of the horrible reality implied in this theory.[2] The first chapter of this book will follow Mr. Van Lysebeth in his exposition of the Aryan conquest and continuing occupation of India.

1.2. Arya

A central point in the whole Aryan debate is the meaning and etymology of the term *Arya* itself. As an illustration of Mr. Van Lysebeth's innocence, I may cite his borrowed opinion on the meaning of the word *Arya*: "According to Prof. A.L. Basham, the word *arya* comes from the Persian *Airiya*, which we find back in modern *Iran*, and designated a powerful Indo-Iranian tribe. Etymologically, it does not mean 'noble' or 'of good pedigree', as has been pretended."[3] He does not seem to know, and his sources have apparently not told him, that names usually have etymologies themselves, and that *Arya* itself, even if later becoming an ethnic appellation in Iran (= *Eran-shahr*, = *Airyanam-khshathra*, "state of the noble ones"), was once a general descriptive term.

In fact, the Persian word is younger than (and therefore not the

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[2] A. Van Lysebeth: *Tantra, le Culte de la Féminité*, Flammarion, Fribourg 1988; p.11-72.

[3] *ibid.*, p.28.

source of) the Sanskrit word. Unlike the "Indo-Aryans", the Iranians came to use the term Arya in an ethnic sense, because ethnically they distinguished themselves from other populations in West Asia by being immigrants from Eranvej, the country they had shared with the Vedic "Indo-Aryans", probably India itself. Their elite identified itself as Arya, "nobles", and outsiders may then have extended the term to the entire Iranian nation. The transition from class designation to ethnic designation is not unusual, cfr. *Munda*, originally "chieftain".

Since Max Müller, the word is often assumed to be derived from *ar-*, "plough, to cultivate" (related to the Latin-derived term *arable*). It has therefore variously been interpreted as "cultivator", agriculturer (civilized sedentary, as opposed to nomads and hunter-gatherers), landlord; or metaphorically as "cultivated", educated, noble (a development parallel with the Latin word *cultura*, from *colere*, to till the soil). From the same root meaning, yet another interpretation could be derived, with some stretching. Again it is the Latin word *colere* that provides a similar semantic development: from "cultivate" to "honour, worship", whence English *cult*, "a system of worship". *Arya* would then mean "the honoured ones".

In 1938, P. Thieme derived it from the Sanskrit root *ari-*, in the sense of "stranger", cognate with Latin *alius*, "other". In his opinion, the derived adjective *arya* means "inclined towards the stranger, hospitable". In the medieval code of chivalry too, hospitality was a central duty of the noble knight. But from the same root, the meaning "foreigner, enemy" could also be derived, and the Rg-Veda does use the word *Arya* several times in this sense.[4] It seems that here, two words with different etymologies have come to coincide in their appearance: Sanskrit has twice the [r] sound where Latin and Greek distinguish between [l] and [r]. The sense of "other" (whence "foreign") is represented by *alius* in Latin, *allos* in Greek, but *ari* in Sanskrit, and rests on an Indo-European form **ali-*. By contrast, the sense of "noble" is represented in Greek by *arete* ("virtue"), *aristoi* ("the best"), *aristokratia* ("rule by the nobility class"), in Sanskrit by *arya* (with structural differentiation between long or short [a] not of importance for the basic meaning), resting on an original Indo-European form **ari-*. So, Thieme's deri-

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[4] The full list of occurrences of *Arya* (both with long and with short [a]), distinguished by meaning, is give in Dr. Ambedkar: ***Who were the Shudras?***, pp.2-3, in his ***Writing and Speeches***, vol.7, p.212-213.

vation of *ari/arya* from *ali/ari* seems to be misconceived, at least as far as the word with the meaning of "noble" is concerned. The "foreigner" word is etymologically and semantically unrelated to the "noble" word.

Another explanation derives it from *a* + *r*, the negating *a*- prefix plus the root *r*-, "to move" (as in Sanskrit *r-cchati*, wherefrom *rta*, the yearly cycle, the world order, possibly also related to Latin *oriri*). This way, *a-r-ya* would be the exact correlate of Latin *in-ers*, "motionless". The Aryans would be the "non-moving ones", the sedentary people, as opposed to the *Turanians* (not to be identified exclusively with the Turkic people, but including the Indo-European Scyths and Tokhars), who were nomadic.[5] This hypothesis is supported by the etymology of *Turan* as the standard Avestan opposite of *Iran*: it is related to Sanskrit *tura*, "fast", and *turati*, "to hurry", "to run". However, this etymology is quite unorthodox from the viewpoint of established Indo-European linguistics: the [r] sound is in this case considered to be a vowel, so that the *alpha privativum* (negating [a]) would be linked to it with the aid of a euphonic -n-, making *anrya* (which in modern Hindi would be pronounced [anriya]).

Therefore, we suggest just the opposite explanation. *Arya* is derived from that same root *r*-, and the full form *ar*- has not incorporated a negating *a*-, but is simply the full vocalized form of the root itself. The root *r*-, *ar*- means "to move" but also "to raise", "to reach", "to meet". The pertinent meaning of a derived adjective *arya* would therefore be "risen to its full height", "straight", "up to standard". A related adjective *rta*, at any rate, means "proper, right, honest, true; worshipped, respected" (all according to V.S. Apte's Sanskrit-English Dictionary). Pertinent meanings of the related noun *rta* include : "fixed or settled rule, law, sacred custom, truth". I don't think we have to look any farther than this: with these core meanings we arrive naturally at the first dictionary meaning of *arya*, viz. "excellent, best", followed by "respectable" and as a noun, "master, lord". The derivative form *arya* then means "typical or worthy of an *arya*", "worthy, honourable, excellent", upholder of *arya* values", and further: teacher, employer, master, father-in-law, friend, Buddha. The Buddhist title *arhat*, "worthy one" comes

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[5] Personal communication from my erstwhile teacher of Persian, the Polish-Belgian iranologist Prof. W. Skalmowski, June 1992, who showed me a draft of his forthcoming article "Le terme *A(i)rya* en Iranien".

from the derived root *arh-*, "to deserve, to be up to, to be able", which further explicitates the basic meaning of the term *arya*.

At any rate, the *arya* etymology is generally accepted as effectively meaning "worthy one, gentleman". Whatever its ultimate origins, in the Vedic and post-Vedic literature, its meaning is "noble". It could be used as a form of address, "lord", which was also used by a wife respectfully addressing her husband. Via the Pali form *ayya* and the Apabhramsha form *ajje*, *ajji*, it has become *-ji*, which is till today the affix of respectful address, as in "Gandhi-ji". Originally it didn't have anything to do with race, and it still doesn't.

1.3. Fantastic Harappa

Mr. Van Lysebeth's thesis is a compilation of bits and pieces from the numerous publications by more authoritative writers who support the Aryan Invasion theory. His rash judgment, which he shares with many political activists in India, may be his own moral responsibility, but intellectually he is simply a conveyor of the dominant thought on this subject. He is a good barometer of the public's impression of current thinking on India's early history.

The central thesis is the black-and-white opposition between the Indus civilization, matriarchal, source of all valuable things in Indian culture; and the Aryan barbarians, patriarchal and destructive, who have come to oppress the original Indus population through the caste system. The two met in about BC 1500, when the impressive Indus cities perished in an Aryan campaign of destruction. The picture of the destroyed Harappan civilization which Mr. Van Lysebeth paints, is very positive.

"Social inequalities exist, judging by the differences in housing, but they are not out of proportion. Racism is unknown: in the graves, skeletons of different race have been found side by side, proving that there were mixed marriages."[6] These different races must have included the pre-Harappan aboriginals and the Harappans, who were immigrants (not "invaders", mind you) from the Mediterranean: "Lothal [a Harappan city in Gujarat] was already a prosperous village when the Harappans arrived... its aboriginal inhabitants, of which the racial affinities have not been determined, were culturally already very advanced... Then, the trade ships of the Harappan empire which, on their way to the South, layed off at Lothal and set up a little colony there. The newcomers brought

[6] *Tantra*, p.14.

new forms of pottery with them..., better tools and ornaments which the locals adopted with enthusiasm. Thus, without violence, without a war of conquest, without enslavement of the locals, the Harappans gradually mingled with them and, uniting their forces and their mutual genius, Lothal developed fast."[7]

Since race will be an important parameter in Mr. Van Lysebeth's discourse, it is worth noticing the loose end which appears where he declares that the Lothal aborigines' race has not been determined. How do we know there was a racial mingling when we don't know what the original separate components were? The number of bodies found in the Harappan cities is but a very small sample, partly due to a widespread practice of cremation, partly also to the Indian climate which is not preservation-friendly. But the skeletons that are available show that the average physical type in this part of India has not substantially changed in the last 7000 years. Indeed, Sir Mortimer Wheeler had already remarked that "the anthropologists who have recently described the skeletons from Harappa remark that there, as at Lothal, the population would appear, on the available evidence, to have remained more or less stable to the present day."[8] It seems that the genes of the racially distinct Aryan invaders have somehow disappeared.

The peaceful co-existence of natives and immigrants, in Van Lysebeth's example the pre-Harappans and Harappans in Lothal, has also been attested in the case of Harappans and supposed Aryans. K.D. Sethna reports: "There was the discovery in 1976 that at Bhagwanpura in the Kurukshetra district of Haryana the people of Painted Grey Ware — supposed by some popularizers of history to be Aryan invaders — were the immediate successors of the Harappans. But the discovery provides no evidence of a conflict. Actually we have an overlap and fusion between the two cultures, a continuity of pottery types, painted designs and terracotta figurines. The damage to the site was due to floods and not war: twice there was an inundation, the first when the late Harappans alone were present, the second when the PGW people were living peacefully alongside them."[9] If excavations are sufficient to declare the Harappans as peaceful immigrants, they may be implying the same

[7] *ibid.*, p.15-16.
[8] Wheeler: *The Indus Civilization* (Cambridge 1968), p.72, quoted in Sethna: *Problem of Aryan Origins*, p.20.
[9] K.D. Sethna: *The Problem of Aryan Origins From an Indian Point of View*, Second Extensively Enlagred Edition, New Delhi, 1992, p.98.

thing about the supposed Aryans.

All the idyllic information on the Indus civilization which Mr. Van Lysebeth has just given, has been exclusively derived from archaeology, without the support of literary evidence: it is hard to believe that this is sufficient to determine all the details which the writer has given. But Mr. Van Lysebeth's source on the Lothal excavations is impeccable: the internationally acclaimed archaeologist S.R. Rao. He does not seem to be aware that the same S.R. Rao, though believing in an external homeland for the Aryans, has rejected the theory that the Harappan civilization was ever destroyed, and that it was destroyed by Aryans. To quote from an authoritative summary of Rao's book *Lothal and the Indus Civilization*: "...the language [the Harappans] spoke shows the affinity to Indo-Aryan in vocabulary, semantics and phonology. The analysis of the physical type also supports a comparatively early incursion of the Indo-Europeans into India, considerably earlier than was hitherto believed... It follows, as the author believes, that the Indo-Europeans were not the destroyers of the Harappan civilization..."[10]

We are not entirely in the dark concerning the Harappan religion, as found in Lothal. According to Van Lysebeth: "There is a consensus that the cult of the mother-goddess, of the *lingam*, of snakes and of Shiva, is pre-Aryan. This implies that it stems from those who inhabited India when the Aryans arrived, viz. the Dravidian Indus civilization."[11] So much for the consensus, and now for some facts: "The cult was spread all over the city, not centralized in big temples. Most houses had their altar specially prepared for the fire ritual, which was certainly very different from the Vedic ritual."[12] So, here we have two data on the religion in Lothal that are not in contrast to the Vedic religion: rituals needed no temple-buildings, but there were fire ritual altars. It is sheer speculation to assume that the Lothal fire ritual was "certainly very different from the Vedic ritual".

With enthusiastic approval, Mr. Van Lysebeth quotes S.R. Rao: "The Harappans observed very divergent religious practices, from very high ethical and philosophical concepts down to a crude animism... Many Indus figurines evoke yoga postures... One of the greatest contributions of the Indus civilization would have been the

[10] *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1977/3, p.276.
[11] *Tantra*, p.19.
[12] *ibid.*, p.19.

science of yoga." To which the *Tantra* author adds: "And I put it more precisely: of tantra, of which yoga is one branch."[13]

Yes, the Indus civilization was great, and one understands the passion with which Mr. Van Lysebeth sets out to vilify those whom he believes were its destroyers.

1.4. The Aryans impose their law

When we come to the harder statements which Mr. Van Lysebeth will make, it is good to keep in mind what he says in an early paragraph: "Everything about the extraordinary Indus civilization is mystery: its origin, its language, its script and even its end... Before this enigma, the archaeologists are perplexed and no explanation finds a consensus."[14] This does not agree very well with the assertion that the Harappans were definitely Dravidians, or that the pre-Aryan origin of Shiva is a matter of consensus.

He goes on to try the well-known explanation for the culture's seeming disappearance: "Must we accuse the Aryan war of conquest? That explanation can only be partial, for neither Mohenjo-Daro nor Harappa, nor any other town seems to have been taken by storm, burned down, plundered and its inhabitants massacred. The handful of skeletons found unburied may be the result of a robbers' crime." That is to say, he accepts the well-known fact that there is no archaeological evidence of an "Aryan conquest". But he cannot be stopped by such a weak *argumentum e silentio*, because: "The battles have no doubt taken place in the open field, the ideal terrain for the light and swift war chariots of the Aryan invaders." Yes, the Harappans were so civilized that they also welcomed their aggressive visitors on the terrain of the latter's choice, and did not defend any of their cities after being defeated on the prairie.

In the rest of the book, we will seek in vain for the first piece of proof for this theory upon which such far-reaching historical scenarios and strident moral indictments are about to be made. In other books on this subject, the situation is not very different.

"Without doubt, the Aryans have accelerated an already ongoing decline, disorganized the political power and chased a large part of the Dravidian inhabitants to the South, before giving the *coup de grace* and enslaving the survivors who stayed behind." Again, of this massive Dravidian migration southwards, no trace of

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[13] *ibid.*, p.19.
[14] *ibid.*, p.20.

proof is mentioned. And how did the pre-Dravidians feel about it, when their land was taken and their culture and language disappeared completely from South India?

Mr. Van Lysebeth acknowledges that the already ongoing decline must largely have been a matter of ecological disaster: apart from possible natural calamities, the effects of a long-drawn-out progressive deforestation must have made themselves felt. Those nice old Harappans did not respect their environment: like many of the early agriculturers, they destroyed the land that fed them. But the worst calamity must have been the Aryans' doing: "It is also supposed that, as the Harappan engineers did not entirely control the river flow, one of their dams had given way: think of the Veda and its mythical struggle between the 'demon' Vrtra, *the one who restrains the waters*, and Indra, *the one who releases the waters*. In destroying the dam and burning the harvest, the invaders have certainly amplified the effects of an already advanced desertification..."[15]

Those who bring up the myth of the dragon Vrtra and the dragon-slayer (*Vrtra-ghna*) Indra as proof of an Aryan-Dravidian struggle, seem to forget that this myth is by no means confined to India. The myth of the dragon-slayer is known in nearly the whole Indo-European area. The flag of Wales (supposedly that of King Arthur) still carries a dragon. Most Saint Michael churches in Europe are christianized Pagan sanctuaries associated with the dragon-slayer myth (typically, they are on hilltops: Leuven, Brussels, Glastonbury). Even the name Vrtra is not confined to India: in Iran the dragon-slayer is called *Verethra-ghna*, where this remained a god-name even after Indra had been turned into a demon, and in Armenian mythology it has become *Veragn*.

So, there is neither literary nor archaeological evidence for the widespread belief that the Aryan invaders destroyed the Harappan civilization. More cautious historians like Prof. Romila Thapar therefore speak of "Aryan immigration". But the net result is the same: after the Aryans settled in India, there is no Harappan civilization anymore. Therefore, as long as we assume an Aryan immigration in the mid-second millennium BC, we can still hold the Aryans somehow guilty of the disappearance of the Harappan civilization, perhaps more through neglect than through destruction.

[15] *ibid.*, p.20.

To think up a scenario, we could imagine that the imposition of Aryan rule had an effect similar to the withering away of indigenous cultures under the pressure of European colonial rule: the Harappan aborigines were just not allowed to keep up their culture and gradually forgot its finer points, including its brightest material achievements in urban architecture. However, the assumption that the Harappan civilization ended in the second millennium BC could itself be questioned: as related in ch.1.3, Mr. Van Lysebeth himself has acknowledged the existence of fire-altars in Harappan cities, a known element of the Vedic culture which has survived till today. In later chapters, we shall see more elements that make the entire assumption of a discontinuity between Harappan and post-Harappan cultures doubtful.

1.5. Aryan racism

In a show of generosity, Mr. Van Lysebeth tones down his allegations: "Let's not practise any reverse racism: let's not attribute to the Aryans alone the responsibility of the Harappan empire's death." Actually, that would not even be "reverse racism", that would merely be a restatement of the racist version of history propagated by British and German writers of a more pro-Aryan school. The Aryans whom Hitler glorified were considered great precisely because they violently subdued earlier populations whom they made subservient to themselves. Mr. Van Lysebeth is giving us exactly the same view of history, only mitigated by the preceding ecological decline of the pre-Aryans (and even that will be forgotten as the argument progresses).

However, before the European race theories, there was an earlier, indigenous Indian theory, according to which the Aryans were not so much violent conquerors, but were a cultured people (whether native or immigrant) who developed agriculture and science. For Mr. Van Lysebeth, this is totally false and an unbelievable denial of the pre-Aryan Harappans' achievements, which the Aryans have at worst destroyed, at best borrowed: "In order to impose, and then to justify their status of *Herrenvolk* [= 'master nation'], the invaders needed to wipe from the defeated people's memories all traces of their ancestral civilization, in order to lower them to the status of rightless slaves, only good to humbly serve their masters... Such a systematical, programmed and successful annihilation of such a vast empire and civilization is without doubt

unique in world history. People have searched lost Atlantis under the waves, in vain; is not the Indus empire such a submerged Atlantis...?"[16] Quite compelling, this comparison with Atlantis. But after evoking the utter improbability of removing such a huge heritage so completely from memory, is there still not some sneaking doubt appearing?

No, because now the big, reassuring slogans are coming: "To those who would estimate that I exaggerate in calling the Indo-Aryans *Herrenvolk*, I quote an 'expert' in these matters, Adolf Hitler. The Aryans, Hitlerians *avant la date*, have literally applied his cynical advice: 'If humanity is divided in three classes, viz. the founders, the conservers and the destroyers of cultures, only the Aryan is fit for the first category.'"[17] Of course, Hitler was not an expert of anything, he was a half-educated artist-soldier and a crank racist.

More Hitler: "'For the development of a superior culture, the presence of inferior people is a necessity, because they alone can compensate for the lack of technical means, without which a superior development is unthinkable... In thus imposing on the defeated ones a hard but useful labour, the Aryan has spared their lives and even bettered their lot in comparison with their so-called freedom. As long as he mercilessly maintains his lordly rank, he remains the master, the guardian of culture and the manufacturer of progress.'"[18] The impressionable reader might forget, and is herewith reminded, that the "Aryan invaders" of Harappa and the theses of Adolf Hitler are merely rhetorically juxtaposed, and that so far our onward-storming Mr. Van Lysebeth has not offered any evidence that would meaningfully link the two.

Van Lysebeth quotes Hitler and comments: "'Always and everywhere the following process has repeated itself: Aryan tribes, often in ridiculously small numbers, subdue foreign nations. Then, stimulated by the specific living conditions of the new environment, and thanks to the abundant manual labour made available by the inferior people, they have been able to develop their organizational talent and their latent creative genius.' To 'justify' the preceding, i.e. to pretend being civilizers, one must wipe out every trace and memory of the pre-existing civilization."[19]

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[16] *ibid.*, p.21.
[17] *ibid.*, p.21, with reference to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, p.318.
[18] *ibid.*, p.21, with reference to *Mein Kampf*, p.318.
[19] *ibid.*, p.22, with reference to *Mein Kampf*, p.319.

A final quote from Hitler will add some racial spice to the scenario which Mr. Van Lysebeth is developing: "'The mixtures of blood lead to the lowering of the racial level and are the unique cause of the decline of all cultures. Men do not disappear because of wars they lost, but because of the weakening of their resistance, which latter only stems from pure blood.'"[20] This would be relevant if it had been coupled with a similar quotation from the Manu Smriti or some such much-maligned Hindu source, but the writer seems not to have found any such line.

Since conquerors tend to abduct or to marry the women of the defeated nation, and to beget children on them, Mr. Van Lysebeth logically assumes that racial purity could not be maintained in the case of an Aryan conquest. Therefore: "Whether in India or elsewhere, the myth of a 'pure Aryan race' is a crookery and calling it 'superior' is pure and simple imposture, of which the world is still paying the consequences."[21] Alright, but what is the relevance? He should give proof that the ancient Indians had the notion of the "Aryan race". Actually, they did not have this notion, they never claimed to be a "pure Aryan race", and if a few 20th century Indians can be found who have espoused a belief in it, it was in imitation of their British mentors. Hindu tradition does not know of an Aryan race, and Mr. Van Lysebeth, when indulging in his indignation against the Hindu "Aryans", is barking at the moon.

Mr. Van Lysebeth parades all the classics of anti-Aryan history-rewriting: "Indra who destroys the forts" [Vedic quote] *of the non-Aryan aboriginals* [arbitrary interpretation], who are described as "noseless" (*anasa*) and "dark-skinned" (*krishnayoni*), is nothing but a tribal leader who is gradually transformed into a god. His opponent Vrtra, which the Vedas have turned into a monster, was in fact the Dravidian leader, who guarded the water-works which Indra destroyed.

Demonizing Vedic religion to its core, Mr. Van Lysebeth claims that "the duel between Indra and Vrtra, officially the symbol of the eternal fight between good and evil, is the central element of the Vedic sacrificial rite."[22] He has already been present when a fire ceremony (*agnihotra*) was conducted, but remains critical: "They are careful not to tell us that it is in commemoration of the destruc-

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[20] *ibid.*, p.22, with reference to *Mein Kampf*, p.319.
[21] *ibid.*, p.25.
[22] *ibid.*, p.25.

tion of the enemies, the *Dasas*, that several ingredients are thrown into the fire, among which the grains symbolize the destruction of the harvest, the cities and the forts, nor [do they tell us] that the pieces of meat represent the enemies burned to death."[23]

Until Mr. Van Lysebeth shows an authentic Hindu source explaining these destructive historical references as the real meaning of the elements of the Vedic sacrifice, I would describe his suspicion that "Indians are careful not to tell us", as a good example of *interpretative delusion*, a common symptom in paranoia patients. When someone is obsessed with a belief which is not well supported by reality, he starts giving distorted interpretations to ordinary events, e.g. seeing a genocide commemoration in an ordinary sacrifice ritual. The most lucid students of Vedic and other rituals have lately been emphasizing that rituals are not meant to "symbolize" anything in the first place. And if throwing grains into the fire symbolizes the destruction of someone else's harvest, are we going to accept that all sacrifices of animals, flowers etc. in all the religions of the world prove that all the communities concerned have a history of genocide and that their commemorative rituals seem harmless only to the naive observer? Clearly, one of Mr. Van Lysebeth's sources has been projecting his own ethno-paranoid notions onto normal religious practices which are merely the Vedic representatives of a world-wide tradition of ritual and sacrifice.

1.6. Apartheid saves the Aryans

Even Mr. Van Lysebeth does not claim that the Harappans were exterminated: after the initial violent encounters, they were only reduced to a low social status. So, the bad Aryans subdued the good Dravidians; but they continued to co-exist with them. Though they are continually equated with Hitler, they refrained from doing exactly that which makes Hitler's name such a supreme taboo: create *Lebensraum* by exterminating the demonized inferior race. Instead, they are accused of having created a kind of Apartheid system: "Compared with the imposed racism of the Aryans in India, the Apartheid in South Africa is a gentle joke, and I am weighing my words. At any rate, let us not practise reverse racism against the Aryans and try to understand their position after their victory over the Dravidians."

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[23] *ibid.*, p.196. Similarly on p.195, with reference to Malati J. Shendge: *The Civilized Demons: the Harappans in Rigveda*.

Let us try to understand: they are a small minority in a country full of vengeful aboriginals. So, like all foreign invaders (e.g. the Muslims in India), they concentrate in citadels...? No, on the contrary: according to the commonly accepted theory presented with such zest by Mr. Van Lysebeth, they did not occupy the cities as bastions from which to control the country, they destroyed the cities and stuck to their pastoral lifestyle, living as dispersed clans, ideal targets for an aboriginal guerrilla. The only bastion they put up was the social bastion of caste.

Mr. Van Lysebeth acknowledges that according to the logic of his theory, the Aryans must have faced two problems: a rebellion of the aboriginals, and the genetic absorption through intermarriage. There are plenty of cases in world history where conquerors have not in the least objected to intermarriage, where increasing their own tribe's number with the help of indigenous women was considered the great prize of conquest, and where there was no concern for *racial* purity. If such a concern is attributed to the "Aryans", then one should be able to pinpoint it in their voluminous literature. But Mr. Van Lysebeth, who has drawn upon the whole gamut of anti-Hindu publications, does not produce a single piece of such literary evidence.

But while the concern for racial purity requires a specific ideology, the concern for safety from rebellions by the defeated peoples is universal among conquerors. Yet, there is no trace of a physical isolation limiting the dangers of armed attacks by aboriginal guerrilleros, and to face this prime danger, the Aryans were content with the following measures:

"1. Wipe out all traces of social and military organization among the defeated people..., destroying even the memory of their civilization...

"2. Classically, reduce them to slavery, deprive them of all ownership rights...

"3. Keep alive among the conquerors the memory of the victory and the hatred by transforming this war into a cult, the Vedic religion."

As for the second danger: "In order to avoid assimilation followed by extinction through mixing, it was necessary to:

"1. Declare themselves a master race (*Herrenvolk*), downgrade the submissive defeated ones to the rank of serfs, and reject the non-subdued ones and make them untouchables.

"2. Rigorously prohibit mixed marriages...

"3. Keep the Aryan woman separate ('racial pollution' passes through the mother...), make her submissive to the Aryan male, repress her sexuality.

"This logic will be applied to the letter, with an inexorable rigorousness. The above explains the seemingly complex structure of Aryan society."[24]

The perceptive reader has noticed the untenable contradictions in this racialist master plan. If you separate the aboriginals keeping them in their own communities, it is impossible to impose on them a forgetfulness about their erstwhile great culture and their subsequent military defeat. The repeated mention of the need to keep them submissive, does not answer the question which the above list of ploys was supposed to answer, viz. *how* to keep them down. The six-point strategy outlined above contains nothing to prevent a wholesale massacre of the conquerors by the natives.

The reduction of Vedic religion to a ploy to keep the memories of the war of conquest alive is frightening but baseless. It is ridiculous to explain the ritual use of fire, which occurs in a great many cultures that have flourished on earth, as a commemoration of the burning down of Harappan cities. All the more so when Mr. Van Lysebeth himself admits that this devastation by fire has been refuted archaeologically.

1.7. Assimilation of non-Aryans

According to Mr. Van Lysebeth, "it is only progressively that the conquerors become rabid racists. During the first centuries, dark-skinned non-Aryan princes who had sometimes allied themselves with the invaders, were aryanized. Similarly, rich Dravidian merchants, after due payment to some understanding Brahmin and some purifications, were properly aryanized. But when they perceived the danger of their ethnic absorption, they haven't settled for half work!"[25] No? As Mr. Van Lysebeth himself writes, the induction of newcomers into the Arya fold has continued for millennia, as exemplified by the Rajputs, who were foreign (Shakas, Hunas, who invaded India 2000 years after the supposed Aryans) or indigenous (Gond/Chandellas) tribes with such power that their aryanization could not be refused to them.

[24] *ibid.*, p.26.
[25] *ibid.*, p.26-27.

Through rituals like *vratyastoma*, many non-Arya (and ex-Arya) people have been accepted (c.q. re-accepted) into the Arya class throughout the centuries. But now we are asked to believe that many aryanized dark-skinned princes started refusing to marry dark-skinned women because they wanted to preserve their honorary but non-existent white racial purity. This scenario is so bizarre that we would expect to find many historical (even satirical) references to it. But while we have a lot of historical data on the development of caste, and even some crank theories explaining caste through mixed heredity (notably in the Manu Smriti), Mr. Van Lysebeth and all his sources just fail to come up with any references to the concept of racial purity.

Linguists working within the Aryan Invasion theory have argued that already in the Rg-Veda, there is a strong non-Indo-European element. Firstly, the Dutch Indo-Europeanist F.B.J. Kuiper has calculated that in Vedic vocabulary, at least 5% and perhaps 8% of the words are from non-Indo-European origin: the source languages of these words are partly unidentified, partly Dravidian and Munda. He comments: "The main point is that Sanskrit had long been *an Indian language* when it made its appearance in history."[26]

Secondly, Kuiper cites cases of Rg-Vedic families in which both Indo-European and non-Indo-European names were given to children, and of non-Indo-European princes patronizing Vedic priests, which does "not allow any other conclusion but that in the Rigvedic society people of different ethnic groups participated in Vedic culture by acting as patrons at festivals and sacrifices". He even shows that the names of important Vedic rishis and noblemen are non-Indo-European: his list, "not meant to be exhaustive", includes Pramaganda, Ambarisha, Brbu, Kurunga, Kutsa, Mudgala, Agastya, Kanva etc. He therefore rejects the "idea of a hatred fostered against the non-Aryans". On the contrary, the attested cases of "individuals, families and peoples that had won access to the higher strata of Rigvedic society... can only be the tip of the iceberg".[27] (It is a different matter that Kuiper's grounds for postulating a non-Indo-European origin of these words and names are not always convincing, and that the presence of a Dravidian root in someone's name need not indicate any *personal* Dravidian connec-

[26] Kuiper: *Aryans in the Rigveda*, p.94-95. Emphasis in the original.
[27] Kuiper: *op.cit.*, p.5-8.

tion, see ch.2.5)

Since the beginning, *Arya* was a socio-cultural, not an ethnic and much less a racial term. The caste system, surfacing in post-Rg-Vedic times, was conceived in a society which had practised ethnic mingling for centuries. The Apartheid theory of caste is based on not a single fact, merely on an outdated projection by dead European scholars working in an intellectual climate tuned to race theories. We will investigate this subject further in ch.1.8, ch.2.7, ch.3.5 and ch.5.3.

1.8. The two races

Let us look for racial purity where racialists have been looking for it since more than a century: in the measurement of human skulls. Certain sophisticated people have said that 'Aryan' denotes a language group, not a race, and that the speakers of the original 'Aryan' language were probably not racially homogenous. Not so Mr. Van Lysebeth: even while stating that "it would be absurd to base physical anthropology on linguistics", he neatly divides the relevant section of the human race into two types:

1. the long-skulled (dolichocephalic) Alpino-Mediterraneans, who had one agricultural civilization stretching from Britain via the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia to the Indus Valley and South India, and
2. the broad-skulled (brachycephalic) Aryans, steppe barbarians who overran the said civilization in most of its settlements in a most violent manner.

At this point I wonder if, even within his own framework of premises, he has his facts right. That dolichocephalic people were predominant in India as in the Mediterranean, seems to be archaeologically attested. Mr. Van Lysebeth relates how they buried their dead in "*tumuli* long like their skulls", while the steppe nomads lived in "huts round like their skulls".[28] However, the Scandinavians seem definitely to fall within his (certainly within Hitler's) 'Aryan' category, yet they are mostly dolichocephalic. By contrast, the 'Alpine' population is rather brachycephalic.

Moreover, about the very oldest culture identified as Indo-European by scholars whom Mr. Van Lysebeth accepts as authorities (esp. Marija Gimbutas), the Srednij Stog 2 culture, which replaced

[28] *Tantra*, p.29, p.31.

the Dniepr-Donets culture of Srednij Stog 1 in about 4500 BC, the editors of the *Journal of Indo-European Studies* state: "The [pre-Indo-European] Dniepr-Donets people are known to be massive Cro-Magnons, continuous from the Upper Palaeolithic; the [Indo-European] Srednij Stog 2 men are described as more gracile, tall-statured, *dolichocephalic* with narrow faces."[29]

Mortimer Wheeler had distinguished between two racial types in Harappa itself, one of which he variously called 'Caspian', 'Mediterranean' or indeed 'Indo-European'. Other anthropologists had classified the skeletons of Lothal into three groups, one of which consisted of 'proto-Nordic and Alpino-Armenoid types'. S.K. Chatterji had described just that combination as 'Aryan': "The Aryan speakers... are believed to have represented a cultural union of two distinct racial stocks: the tall, blonde, long-headed, straight-nosed Nordics, and the comparatively short and dark and short-headed Alpines." To which K.D. Sethna adds: "Both these 'racial types' are clearly attested at Lothal before the supposed migration."[30]

Perhaps it is best to disregard the details of Mr. Van Lysebeth's brief excursion into the actual racial dimension of cultural history. Competent authorities have warned against the "semi-conscious prejudices on original genetic characteristics of the Indo-Europeans: they are supposed to be blond and blue-eyed".[31] On the other hand, physical anthropology does have a bearing on the archaeology of migrations, and we should not fall into the other extreme of denying the statistical physical characteristics of groups of people such as the original Indo-European tribes.

Lately, findings have been published which suggest that, for all the racial mingling that has taken place, there is still a broad statistical correlation between certain physical characteristics and nations, even language groups. Thus, the percentage of individuals with the Rhesus-negative factor is the highest (over 25%) among the Basques, a nation in the French-Spanish borderland that has preserved a pre-Indo-European language, and represents the purest Old-European 'race'. Other pockets of high incidence of Rh-neg. are in the same part of the world: western Morocco, Scotland and, strangely, the Baltic area (which is claimed to be just near the

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[29] *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1977/4, p.345. Emphasis added.
[30] Sethna: op.cit., p.20, with reference to S.K. Chatterji: "The Basic Unity Underlying the Diversity of Culture", in *Interrelations of Culture*, UNESCO, Paris 1951.
[31] T.V. Gamkrelidze and V.V. Ivanov, in *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1985/1-2, p.182.

Indo-European motherland); while among the Bantus, Austronesians and Mongoloids, this blood type is almost non-existent. An analysis of these and similar biological data leads to the calculation of the *'genetic distance'* between populations. A provisional table of this type of findings shows that North-Indians and South-Indians are indeed very close, much closer than 'Aryan' North-Indians and 'Aryan' Iranians.[32]

But on the whole, the left-over statistical correlation between genetic traits and language groups is less important than the evidence for the opposite phenomenon: languages spreading across genetic frontiers. Where a small group of people have spread out over a vast area and lived in isolation ever since, as has happened in large parts of America in the past 20,000 years, genetic differentiation and linguistic differentiation have gone hand in hand, and the borderline between genetic types usually coincides with a genetic borderline. By contrast, in areas with lots of migration and interaction between diverse peoples, as in the Old World, genetic and linguistic divisions only coincide by exception. For instance, the Altaic languages are spoken by the Mongolians, eponymous members of the Mongoloid race, and by the Turks, who have mixed so thoroughly with their Persian, Armenian, Greek and Slavic neighbours that they belong to the 'white' or 'Caucasian' race. The Hungarians are genetically closer to their Slavic and German neighbours than to their Uralic linguistic cousins. India being the meeting-place (or rather, mixing-place) of Mongoloid, Caucasian and Austronesian racial strands, it is naturally impossible to identify the speakers of the different Indian language-groups with different races.

1.9. Pre-Aryan civilization destroyed

The most important element in Van Lysebeth's position on the Aryan and pre-Aryan 'races' is that he has divided the population of Europe, West Asia and most of India into just two civilizational groups (regardless of their imputed skull proportions): the patriarchal steppe barbarians, who had no culture and destroyed everything; and the matriarchal agriculturalists whose civilization stretched from Britain to South India (reason why he calls them "the authentic Indo-Europeans", the Aryans being "the false Indo-

[32] Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza: "Genes, Peoples and Languages", *Scientific American*, November 1991.

Europeans").

This picture is essentially the one given wide currency by the Lithuanian-American scholar Mrs. Marija Gimbutas, who has, on the one hand, elaborated a somewhat idealized picture of the agricultural civilization (roughly 7000-3000 BC) of the Balkan and Anatolia, with its mother-goddesses, and on the other, identified the Indo-Europeans with the horse-breeding, patriarchal ***kurgan*** (grave-hill, ***tumulus***) culture of the lower Volga/Dniepr area (roughly 5000-2500 BC).[33] This identification is supported by the fact that ***kurgans*** were still common among the Indo-European Scyths who lived in the same area in the last centuries BC, though it can not strictly be excluded that these were newcomers adopting the customs of their new, originally non-Indo-European country. Also, the ***kurgan*** findings show that this population worshipped gods of sun, sky and thunder, that it used horses, and that it had a class system: things which are also attributed to the original Indo-Europeans on linguistic and cultural-anthropological grounds.

However, Mrs. Gimbutas speaks of a violent destruction only in reference to the evolution in the Balkan area, not in Western, Northern or Eastern Europe or West and South Asia. And even then, she describes the over-all process of the indo-europeanization of the Balkan as an "infiltration", a term more subtle than "invasion", nothing like the *Blitzkrieg* which Mr. Van Lysebeth is painting.

The expansion of the ***kurgan*** culture over Europe, in three successive waves, is fairly well-attested archaeologically. About the supposed spread of the Indo-Europeans to India and Iran, Mrs. Gimbutas does not give details, and in the extant literature no archeaologically supported scenario of the Asian movement of the Indo-Europeans is available, the way we have mapped their spreading into Europe. On the contrary, when it comes to Asia, we find even the topmost indo-europeanists relying on the outdated theories *à la* Mortimer Wheeler, the chief proponent of the "Aryans destroyed Harappa" scenario, without fully checking the factual basis of these theories (which is shaky: even Mr. Van Lysebeth admits that the Harappan cities were not burnt down, as Mortimer Wheeler had assumed).

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[33] The ***kurgan*** identification was developed in M. Gimbutas: ***Prehistory of Eastern Europe*** (1956). The pre-Indo-European civilization is described in M. Gimbutas: "Old Europe ca. 7000-3500 BC: the Earliest Civilization before the Infiltration of the Indo-European Peoples", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1973/1.

For instance, in 1985 Jean Haudry wrote: "The Vedas and Brahmanas mention the Aryan invasion in India" (actually, they don't), and: "It is probable that the Aryans left from the site of Jamna on the Volga" and that some of them "came to India where they first arrived towards the beginning of the second millennium BC".[34] But when you look at the references, this turns out to be based on G.D. Kumar's article on the "Aryan Invasions" in the starting issue of the *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, in 1973, which in turn is nothing but a restatement of the old arguments of Mortimer Wheeler c.s. While the Indo-European expansion in Europe is being researched thoroughly, their presence in Asia is still perceived through the misty glasses of outdated but uncritically accepted hypotheses. Much of current thinking on early Indo-European history in Asia is a projection of the better-known patterns of their expansion in the Balkan.

In about 7000 BC, the pre-Indo-European civilization of the Northeastern Mediterranean must have spread out to the East and the West, along with the new invention (the "Neolithic revolution") of agriculture, from its source area in and around Anatolia (present-day Turkey).[35] They created the wealth which attracted the steppe nomads, who came and took the power from them: in some instances violently, in others gradually. The more dramatic view of this episode has it that in this calamity they were enslaved and saw the Aryan culture imposed on them (though they managed to smuggle much of their own culture and religion into the new order). Their Mother Goddess cult has been preserved as the (non-Vedic) *shaktic* tradition in India, and has elsewhere continued in the form of mother goddesses, as a counter-current against "the foreign patriarchal system, imported from the cold", i.e. from the steppe.

According to Mr. Van Lysebeth, "from India to Europe, the same drama has repeated itself everywhere. Leaving their icy steppes, from 3000 BC onwards nomadic plunderers invade the pre-Aryan civilizations, making the defeated natives their serfs. These barbarians were neither of pure race, nor superior, except in brute force. Everywhere they have destroyed civilizations."[36] In this age

[34] J. Haudry: *Les Indo-Européens*, p.114.
[35] Colin Renfrew identifies the Indo-Europeans with this neolithic agricultural civilization. But his viewpoint is generally rejected: chronologically too early, and culturally not fitting the established picture of the Indo-Europeans.
[36] *Tantra*, p.30.

of multiculturalism, we had just learned to scrap the word "barbarian" from our dictionaries, and that we should see the complex cultural motifs and structures even in the most illiterate and primitive cultures. But the Barbarian is back.

The drama which Mr. Van Lysebeth sketches, has indeed been enacted in some regions of the Balkan. There, the "Old European" civilization, known as the Vincha culture, disappeared at the time of the presumably Indo-European immigration, and it is archaeologically attested that many villages were burnt down. But the natives were not exterminated, and their cultural motifs re-appeared in Mycenean and Classical Greek culture. Most notable among the cultural motifs attributed to the Old Europeans are the mother goddesses: Gaia, the earth goddess, Artemis, mistress of the beasts, Hera, queen of heaven, etc. But there are no traces of this drama in most of Europe, nor in Anatolia, the heartland of the mother-oriented agricultural civilization, nor in Iran, nor indeed in India.

1.10. Sons of the soil versus nomads

An interesting corollary of this notion of the genesis of European and Indian society through forcible incorporation of pre-Aryan agriculturers into the political system of the Aryan nomads, is this: "A capital fact: attached to the soil, the agriculturers are extraordinarily stable, to the extent that our present-day farmers can be considered as the direct descendents of the Neolithic cultivators." This is also what the 19th-century Aryan race theorists like Count de Gobineau thought: the European common people, then still mostly rural, are a pre-Aryan substratum (though many of them are brachycephalic, including the Flemish peasants who make up broad-skulled Van Lysebeth's own ancestry). For Gobineau cs., the implication was: democracy will lead to a re-empowerment of these pre-Aryan layers of the European population, to the detriment of the Aryan elite and its superior culture.

If at all we have to bring Hitler into the picture (and Mr. Van Lysebeth insistently does), it is worth keeping in mind that the "attachment to the soil" so typical of the pre-Aryan agriculturalists, and so untypical of the Aryan nomads, was precisely the *number one* cultural motif of the Nazis. Hitler detested wandering nations like the Gypsies and the Jews, because they had no roots in the soil.

There are also some problems with our usual assumptions

about these nomads. While the sedentary people of the Neolithic developed agriculture, the nomads changed from hunting to cattle-rearing. But can these two worlds of agriculture and cattle-rearing, of sedentary and nomadic life be separated so neatly? The Bedouins in Arabia constantly travel between meeting-points with the sedentary people for trade. It is doubtful that even cattle-rearing nomads can economically exist by themselves. The Aryans are said to have used chariots; but these require a number of components, on which a range of craftsmen have to work, using specialized tools. Could pure nomads living in tents have produced chariots to order, in the large numbers which Vedic literature seems to suggest? On the other hand, the sedentary agriculturists must have used oxen and kept pigs. They too had a notion of "cattle wealth", which notion in the Rg-Veda is taken as proof of a culture of cattle-rearing nomads.

The Austrian scholar Stefan Zimmer, who looks into the Indo-European ethnogenesis problem from the angle of cultural anthropology, aptly remarks: "Nomads are not, as has long been assumed... a half-way stage of human development between 'hunter-gatherers' and 'agriculturists'. Rather, nomadism presupposes the existence of sedentary farming cultures. Nomads and farmers are in a multiple relation of economic interdependence, and the former cannot exist without goods stolen, exchanged or bought from the latter."[37] As for the Indo-European 'nomads', they were not only doing business with neighbouring sedentary farming cultures, but they practised some agriculture themselves.

According to Marija Gimbutas, who holds up the South Russian Kurgan culture (5000-2500 BC) as the Indo-European source culture, this Kurgan culture did practise agriculture, though not as sophisticated as the contemporary cultures of Anatolia and the Balkan, which "practised a full-fledged agriculture with all cereals known (barley, several kinds of wheat, rye, oats, lentils, peas, vetch)". And these farming cultures, in turn, also bred "all domesticated animals except the horse".[38] So, the absolute opposition between cattle-rearing nomads on the North-East of the Black Sea and sedentary agriculturers on its South-West side, is toned down to a gradual opposition: emphasis on cattle-rearing (including the

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[37] S. Zimmer: *Ursprache, Urvolk und Indogermanisierung*, p.21.
[38] M. Gimbutas: "Primary and Secondary Homeland of the Indo-Europeans", in *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1985/1-2, p.185.

horse) combined with primitive agriculture versus emphasis on agriculture combined with cattle-rearing (except for the horse). I propose that the concomitant opposition between patriarchal and matriarchal, between sky gods and earth goddesses, should equally be toned down.

There may also be a good side to the barbarian nomads. Firstly, they too invented and created in order to make their way of life possible. To quote the Russian professor Okladnikov on the genesis of nomadism in his own area, Novosibirsk: "In southern Siberia there appeared a complex way of life based on agriculture and cattle breeding, one example of which was the Tagar culture on the Yenisei. But even before this, in the steppes of Mongolia and the trans-Baikal region region among the tribes of the slab-grave culture, there had developed a basically different economy and way of life which was to become that of the nomad steppe tribes of Central Eurasia, during the following four millennia. Of outstanding importance was the invention of the bronze bit which made possible the use of horses for riding. The nomads developed a completely new material culture, one which was adapted to a mobile life with cattle in the steppes. This included the felt tent, the hooded cart, a complex and highly productive milk economy with dairy foods, kumiss and lactic alcohol, cheese, and much else concerning which the hunters and their fishermen neighbours had no concept. The people of this culture had guaranteed supplies of food not only in the form of meat, but also of milk products."[39]

Moreover, the nomads brought not only disruption to their sedentary neighbours: "Contrary to popular opinion, the nomads were not simply the enemies of progress; they were an influential force in universal history and the catalysts of many events. They not only took, but also gave a great deal to their neighbours. We see an example of this in the history of the aesthetics of China where, under the influence of the nomadic tribes, a new style of art, dynamic and penetrated by the spirit of live realism, the Huai style, displaced the stiff, priestly style of the Yin (or Shang)/Chou era. Because of their mobility, the nomadic tribes of Inner Asia played an important role as intermediaries between various countries and nations. The rise of metallurgy gave a powerful stimulus to broad contacts, because metals, especially rare metals such as

[39] A.P. Okladnikov: "Inner Asia at the Dawn of History", in *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, p.94-95.

tin, may be found in only a few localities."[40]

An even more important fact that should create some doubts about the stereotype of "barbaric horsemen from the steppes", is the victory of the Indo-European language, supposedly spoken by these steppe nomads. When we look at other cases of "barbarians" overrunning civilized countries, we see them lose their language in most cases. The Visigoths in Spain, the Vandals in North Africa, the Manchus in China, the Turks in India: within a few generations, they adopted the language of their more advanced surroundings, along with the administration and culture. Only where there is almost a physical replacement of population, the "barbaric" language wins through. An example is the turkicization of what is now called Turkestan: as long as Turks entered the Abbasid empire in small bands, they easily adopted the Arabic or Persian language, even when they became the effective rulers behind the Abbasid throne; only after the massacre of the Persian population in what is now Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan during the Mongol conquest, and its partial replacement with Turkish tribes who made up the bulk of the "Mongol" troops, did the Turks impose their language on this more civilized area.

The only case where Indo-Europeans formed a ruling elite which was soon linguistically absorbed by its subjects, is the Mitanni dynasty in what is now Kurdistan, in about 1400 BC (and probably, a few centuries earlier, the Kassites in Mesopotamia). Elsewhere, the Indo-European language has been uniquely successful. Either we have to assume that the earlier population was nearly exterminated; this would be proven if in pre-Aryan skeletons we find racial types that disappear with the Aryan entry, *quod non.* Or we must assume that they were small in number, smaller than the Aryans; but at a stage where civilization meant more systematic food production and therefore demographic growth, this would jeopardize the picture of "barbaric Aryans versus civilized pre-Aryans". Lastly, we may suppose that the Aryans did have a cultural prestige and a system of government sophisticated enough to make adoption of pre-Aryan structures unnecessary (e.g. it has been shown that the celebrated Roman system of law is based on all-Indo-European legal tradition); in that case, the Aryans were not much more barbarian than their neighbours.

[40] A.P. Okladnikov: op.cit., p.95.

1.11. Races and castes

Citing several impeccable sources, Mr. Van Lysebeth goes on to argue that in India too, both in the Harappan cities and in the Neolithic and Megalithic cultures of South India, skulls of the Mediterranean type form the large majority, followed by skulls of the Australoid (of which the pure type would be represented by the remnants of the Vedda tribes) type. We may add that the proportion is practically the same today in most of the Indian population, with the exception of the Panjab, Kashmir and Pakhtoonistan, where the robust and often brachycephalic type is strongly present, as it was in Harappan days; as we know from the earliest supposedly "Aryan" skulls found in Russia, there is no reason to identify the robust brachycephalics as "Aryans" and the others as "pre-Aryans".

But Mr. Van Lysebeth makes a different comparison with the present situation: "Ultra-schematically, we may divide the Indian population in three principal groups, of which none is of pure race, of course. Firstly we should mention the bulk of the Indian population, which is of Dravidian stock; secondly, much less numerous, the so-called 'Aryans' of the three superior classes; and finally a minority of tribal Indians who make up most of the Untouchables. Now, if we except the Aryans, we find this racial proportion since the Harappan period."[41]

He has unmistakably written that the "three upper classes" (meaning castes/*varnas*) are Aryans, and are of a racial type not represented among the skeletons found in the Harappan cities (at least, the southern city of Mohenjo-Daro with its 18 exhumed skeletons). He has implied that "Aryan" means a racial type, to which the three upper castes belong, and which is fairly new to India. This is pivotal in his entire thesis: the caste system is a racial apartheid system by which the Aryan invaders, as the three upper castes, have preserved their racial purity at least to a substantial extent.

As we shall see (ch.5.3), none other than Dr. Ambedkar, authentic leader of the lowest castes, has rejected this thesis, with reference to the best studies in physical anthropology then available. Perhaps Mr. Van Lysebeth disposes of new material that refutes the work of G.S. Ghurye and others, and that proves that the upper castes are racially different from the rest in a systematic way,

[41] *Tantra*, p.33.

and also from the Harappans? Though good at searching his authoritative sources for convenient testimonies, Mr. Van Lysebeth does not even attempt to come up with a single piece of evidence for what really is the crux of his whole story. All his invective against the "racist Brahmins" in the ensuing chapters is all based on a fond repetition of some hearsay from political agitators, without any scientific basis.

The term *Arya*, which Indians have often used to designate the elite in general, did not have any racial sense until European scholars, under the spell of the intellectual fashion and sometimes also of colonial/missionary compulsions, read that racial sense into it. Now that Mr. Van Lysebeth has brought the discussion to the naked level of racial characteristics, he must prove that *Arya* coincides with brachycephalic (or other objective physical traits), or else retract his thesis. So far, on this point too, doubts and objections regarding the Aryan Invasion theory remain unrefuted.

While not claiming the last word on this much-debated question, we can cite some authorities who reject the identification of caste (*varna*) with race on physical-anthropological grounds. Kailash C. Malhotra writes: "Detailed anthropometric surveys carried out among the people of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal and Tamil Nadu revealed significant regional differences within a caste and a closer resemblance between castes of different varnas within a region than between sub-populations of the caste from different regions. On the basis of analysis of stature, cephalic and nasal index, H.K. Rakshit (1966) concludes that 'the Brahmins of India are heterogeneous and suggest incorporation of more than one physical type involving more than one migration of people'. A more detailed study among eight Brahmin castes in Maharashtra on whom 18 metric, 16 scopic and 8 genetic markers were studied, revealed not only a great heterogeneity in both morphological and genetic characteristics but also showed that 3 Brahmin castes were closer to non-Brahmin castes than [to the] other Brahmin castes. P.P. Majumdar and K.C. Malhotra (1974) observed a great deal of heterogeneity with respect to OAB blood group system among 50 Brahmin samples spread over 11 Indian states. The evidence thus suggests that *varna* is a sociological and not a homogeneous biological entity."[42]

[42] K.C. Malhotra: "Biological Dimensions to Ethnicity and Caste in India", in K.S. Singh: *Ethnicity, Caste and People*, p.65.

This general rejection of the racial basis of caste does not exclude that specific castes stand out physically in their environment. Firstly, any group that goes on breeding endogamously for generations will have "family traits" recognizable for the regular and sharp observer. Secondly, intra-Indian migrations have taken place so that certain caste groups retain the physical charcateristics of their source region's population for quite a few generations. Thus, the Muslim invasions chased some Rajput castes from western India to the Nepalese borderland, and some Saraswat Brahmins from Kashmir to the Konkan region.

The Chitpavan Brahmins of Maharashtra are often mentioned as a caste that stands out as regards physical type. Their slightly more "Nordic" build and the occurrence of blue eyes look like the perfect evidence for the theory that the Brahmins are the descendents of the Nordic Aryans who invaded India in 1500 BC. In fact, it is only during the initial Islamic onslaught that the Chitpavans migrated from the borderland (reportedly from Shakadweep, Scyths' land, which extended as far as the Aral Lake) to their present habitat. The descendents of Sher Shah's Pathan soldiers who mixed with Bengali women are another community that is still physically distinct to the keen observer. The rich biological variety in the Indian chapter of the human species is due to many factors, but so far the Aryan Invasion has not been shown to be one of them.

1.12. Dravidian invaders

Meanwhile, another implication of this theory in its mature version deserves our attention: "The Dravidians, who introduced megalithic culture in South India, were not autochthonous... Everything indicates that [they] came from North-West India, from where they were chased before or during the Rgvedic era."[43] So far, no news: the Dravidians invaded South India (though it is not true that "everything indicates" this) and told the natives that they had no choice but to yield their places. But that was not their first migration.

After summing up some plants and nutritional habits which the Dravidians have in common with the Mediterranean area, the author presents this argument: "The linguistic kinship between Drav-

[43] *Tantra*, p.34, with reference to B. Narasimhaiah and P. Banerjee.

idian and the ancient languages of the Middle East proves that the Dravidians are not autochthonous to India and that they have come from the West as immigrants."[44]

Of course, this reasoning is flawed: it is exactly as true and as wrong to say that this kinship proves that the West Asian languages came from India (the same hasty assumption has been made about the kinship of North-Indian and European languages). Moreover, the specifics about this postulated kinship are missing. Sumerian is said to be related to Caucasian, Dravidian has been linked with the Uralic languages and with the unknown language of the Minoans (pre-Greek Cretans), Indo-European with several others including Austronesian, but there is as yet no definite proof of the Mediterranean connection of Dravidian. The Dravidian-related language farthest to the West is probably Elamite, attested in southern Iran since the 3rd millennium BC. So far, there is no solid proof that a Dravidian migration took place from West to East rather than the other way round, though David McAlpin's work on the Elamo-Dravidian connection is supplying strong indications (see ch.2.8).

The one indication for a Dravidian immigration from the West, but which only concerns the present Dravidians' physical (as opposed to their linguistic) ancestors, is race. The South Indian population is classified as a mixture of Mediterranean and Australoid (which latter were definitely present in South India since the Paleolithic). We should not be misled by the term "Mediterranean" into assuming that the Mediterranean area has been proven to be the *Urheimat* of this race, but it is plausible to assume that the Mediterranean racial type developed its typical characteristics in relative isolation, away from Australoids and others, and mixed with them only at a later stage. But whether this Mediterranean wave of immigrants brought the Dravidian languages along with them, is a different matter altogether.

At any rate, ever since Father Heras in 1953 declared the Harappans to be Dravidian immigrants from the Mediterranean (a view adopted also by Alain Daniélou, one of Van Lysebeth's chief sources)[45], the Aryan Invasion theory has become doubly interesting. The ugly Aryans were invaders, bad enough, but *"une inva-*

[44] *ibid.*, p.35, with reference to David McAlpin.
[45] Rev. H. Heras s.j.: *Studies in Proto-Indo-Mediterranean Culture* (Indian Historical Research Institute, Bombay 1953).

sion peut en cacher une autre" (one invasion can conceal a second one). While the Aryan invaders cannot claim to be real Indians, neither can the Dravidians. They still have the honour of bringing civilization to India from the much more advanced Mediterranean, which is better than the ugly Vedic religion from the inhospitable steppes, but the Dravidians too have to renounce the claim of being native Indians.

1.13. The *Omkara* exposed

In the following four sub-chapters, we shall explore some of Mr. Van Lysebeth's theses on the postulated cultural contrast between Aryans and Harappans/Dravidians.

When you ask pandits and writers on Hinduism where the sound *Om* comes from, they have elaborate explanations about the primeval sound, bringing forth the three worlds (heaven, earth, atmosphere), symbolized by the component letters A, U (these two are *sandhi*-assimilated to O) and M (which really represents not an additional consonant but the nasalization of the vowel). This threesome is also symbolized by the letter sign, the *Chandra* (crescent) and the *Bindu* (dot), which together make up the Om sign; or some such scholastic construction.

Apparently this highly cerebral explanation has been thought up after the fact; a real explanation should find the root of this pervasive *Om* symbol in the world of experience. This we may find in the world of yogis, who explain that *Om* is the "sound of silence", the humming honeybee sound which the yogi hears when he concentrates his attention inside.

Such explanation will not convince the skeptical and materialist moderns, who will demand a more physical explanation. Let us then look at the discussion from their angle, if only because their starting-point is shared by Mr. Van Lysebeth. So, the official Hindu spokesmen are not giving us a credible answer to our question where people got the *Om* sign from. Now, Mr. Van Lysebeth reveals the shocking truth.

Remember that the title of his book is *Tantra*, a term which Westerners have come to associate vaguely with sexual practices for which some spiritual merit is claimed. Van Lysebeth upholds this interpretation, but adds that "for the contemporary Indian masses, Tantra designates all non-Vedic cults and doctrines, which is significant for the opposition, even the fundamental antagonism

between the Aryan-Vedic-Brahminical system and Tantra".[46]

This is by no means the universally accepted definition. As Sri Aurobindo has said, Tantra is the science of making the spiritual present in all spheres of existence: in sound, in visual form, in architecture, in the body, in ritual. This is present in all religions, including the Vedic. Thus, the ***mandala*** or cosmological design representing the directions of space as associated each with a colour, a geometrical shape, a symbolic animal, an element of nature etc., is a typical product of Tantra, and is a type of symbolism attested among the most diverse cultures. From a Christian viewpoint, one could equate Tantra with "Paganism". In India, Tantra is a classical designation for the Puranic doctrines, which include Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism. Modern authorities like Sir John Woodroffe and Gopinath Kaviraj have defined Tantra in such a way as to make it virtually synonymous with Hinduism. The Vedic tradition can be seen as one offshoot of the multifarious age-old Tantric spectrum, somewhat like Buddhism is an offshoot of Upanishadic Hinduism. The magic spells of the Atharva-Veda are exactly what the common Indian understands by "Tantra": any sorcerer, soothsayer or amulet-maker is called a "Tantrik".

The effective meaning of the term Tantrism is very similar to that of Taoism in China. Nowadays, a sorcerer, geomancer or *Yijing* (Book of Changes) diviner is commonly referred to as a "Taoist". Like Tantra, Taoism has always been rooted in the crafts, as opposed to the high theoretical philosophy. *Tantra*, literally "(thread-)stretching instrument, loom", whence "two- or more-dimensional system", whence "system, treatise", effectively means: a manual or treatise on a specific craft or science. This is roughly synonymous with *Vedanga*, the "members of the Veda" which contain the more practical and secular knowledge, such as mathematics, astronomy and medicine. In so far as the term Tantra applies to religion, it means an exposition of a religious *craft*, such as the techniques of "raising the *Kundalini* power" or the art of making Mandalas. Similarly, Taoism is firmly rooted in the exploration of nature and in practical arts like painting, gardening, medicine, chemistry, which has had useful results like the discovery of magnetism and the invention of gun-powder. At the same time, like Tantrism, it has its yogic component, its esoteric physiology (inner

[46] *Tantra*, p.72.

circuits of "subtle energy"), as well as a sexual mysticism. There are indications that sexual practices of Left-hand Tantrism reached Bengal and Nepal from China.[47]

On the analogy of Taoism as a counter-current to the official Confucianism, one could construe Tantrism as a counter-current to Vedism. However, just like the opposition between the more "female-oriented, nature-centred" Taoism and "male-oriented, power-centred" Confucianism has been much exaggerated so as to conceal their common presuppositions (such as the very concept of *Tao*, "the way", which is central to Confucianism), so also the common roots of Vedism and Tantrism are being obscured. At any rate, Tantra is a very general term, and can hardly be confined to the sense of "anti-Vedic religion of the conquered but unsubmissive pre-Aryans".

Van Lysebeth reformulates the popular theory that against the sky gods of the Aryans, the Harappans had a religion which was centred on the earth and on earthly themes like fertility. This religion, with its free use of sexual rites and imagery, lives on as the Tantric tradition, a permanent counter-current to the dominant Vedic religion. But the latter has been forced to incorporate some elements from the former. One of these elements is the Om sound, which is not mentioned in the Vedas (it surfaces as late as the Chandogya Upanishad), and "therefore" must have been borrowed from the Harappan Tantric religion.

So, our Tantraguru draws a few suggestive variations on the *Om* glyph, and teaches us that it is nothing but one of those blunt sexual drawings which you can find carved on the inside of men's lavatory doors. Just genitals in the act. This is supported by the equally erotic significance of the mantra *"Om mani padme hum"*, which refers to the "jewel in the lotus", i.e. the *lingam* in the *yoni*.[48] Of course, both the Brahmins and the Buddhists, with their patriarchal repressive views on sex, deny all this. That very prudery, logically coupled with an outlet through sexual exploitation of women (Brahmins fattening themselves by renting out temple prostitutes) and pornographic creations like Khajuraho (where accord-

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[47] N.N. Bhattacharyya: *History of the Tantric Religion*, p.96-105. The influence is plausible, and is positively indicated by terms like *Chinachara*; as a case of reciprocity in India-China transmission of culture, it is certainly better than the Chinese claim that "Buddha had it all from Lao-zi", a chronologically absurd but otherwise innocent piece of chauvinism.

[48] *ibid.*, p.181-183.

ing to Mr. Van Lysebeth, the erotic sculptures are nothing but a life-size advertisement for the services of the temple prostitutes), constitutes the essential difference between the hypocritical Aryan culture and the healthy, spontaneous and gender-equalitarian culture of the Harappans.

I cannot do more than remark that this juicy scenario for the genesis of *Om* is highly implausible. It says that the selection of the *Om* sound is based on a property of its alphabetic representation in cursory Devanagari script (whose ancestor the Brahmi script is by current chronology several centuries younger than the first mention of *Om*), viz. its accidental resemblance to the shape of a sexual graffito.

Om is a very simple sound, and was doubtlessly selected for its sound quality, including its vibratory character (it is properly pronounced with *anunasika*, i.e. nasalization, indicated by the *chandra-bindu*, and sounds like the French word *on*, or like the second part of the Hindi word *kyon*). It must have been selected from the world of sound, and if we exclude esoteric yogic explanations, we may guess that perhaps, the *Om* sound was selected as an imitation of the metallic sound of a string, or perhaps as an imitation of the typical sound of the cow. The cow, after all, is hailed as a sacred animal both on the Indus seals and in Vedic literature, and is notably described as the symbol of the Word, the primeval sound. That Vedic mantras followed a practice in which animals indulge (cfr. bird's songs), and that they resemble the monotonous "mantras" of the frogs (Rg-Veda 7:103), was acknowledged in the Vedic period itself; so why not ritually intone the sound of the cow? This primeval sound, the carrier-wave for all differentiated sounds (like the *tambura*'s monotonous background sound present in Indian classical music), is traditionally vocalized as *Om*.

As for its visual properties, we may draw attention to the fact that the *Om* glyph is suggestive of the elephant god Ganesha, with the *chandra* and the *bindu* resembling his whole tusk and his broken tusk. No need for a sexual conspiracy behind the *Omkara*.

1.14. Ethnic basis of religions

Apart from the factual question of the invention or selection of the *Om* sound as a religious symbol, there is something not quite right with the over-all ethnic framework in which India's religious history is cast. Why should Tantric and Vedic thought currents

have to be the heritage of distinct ethnic groups (Harappans and Aryans)? No positive indications for this pre-Aryan origin have been given. Thus, there should be Tantras written in pre-Aryan languages, or at least preserving pre-Aryan terminology. But in fact, even in the Dravidian languages most religious terminology is borrowed from Sanskrit, whereas the Dravidian influences on Sanskrit are by no means concentrated in the sphere of religious vocabulary.[49]

Why should earth goddesses and sky gods each have filled up the lopsided world-views of two distinct ethnic groups? It is just as well possible that, in the best polytheistic tradition, both approaches existed within the same nation.

In China, middle-class urban culture was very regulated by morality, while hill tribals and nomads were (and are till today) "notorious" for their "undisciplined" sexual customs. Within literate Chinese culture, there has been a dominant stream of patriarchal Confucian morality, but also a Taoist cult of the feminine and the spontaneous, which sometimes involved sexual rites and practices. Yet, for all we know, the Taoist line is never presented as "a reaction of subdued natives to the intrusion of patriarchal culture". Within man, both tendencies are present, and therefore both can develop within a single nation or culture.

The same thing can be said about competing tendencies in most civilizations. Were the competing Epicurean and Stoic schools of later Greek philosophy derivative of two distinct ethnic components of the Greek population? Were the realists and the nominalists of Christian scholastic philosophy, or the Catholics and the Protestants, two genetically different tribes? It is only in India that these opposing tendencies are explained as an ethnic conflict.

At this point, Mr. Van Lysebeth really involves himself in divisive Indian political movements of which he knows very little. Like some extremists in the Dravidian and Dalit movements, he sees a millennia-old bipolar struggle continuing till today (and coming to a head in the near future).

This is his grim truth about the situation of the Dravidians: "The Aryan invasion has been a disaster for India, just like for all the other Alpino-Mediterranean peoples invaded by the steppe nomads. Let us imagine that the Huns had overpowered us, de-

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[49] See the list of Vedic Sanskrit vocabulary (383 words) claimed as borrowed from non-Indo-European languages, in Kuiper: *Aryans in the Rigveda*, p.89-93.

stroyed our civilization, and that we would be their slaves till today, as well as our descendents for thousands of years to come, and we will understand the drama of the defeated Harappan civilization."[50]

He explains religious symbolism in terms of this ethnic conflict, for instance the *Shiva Nataraja* iconography: "The left foot crushes an evil-doing dwarf: for the tantrics, it is Shiva's Aryan father-in-law, responsible for sweet Sati's death, but 'officially' it is the demon Muyalaka."[51] This would make Dravidian Hinduism into a historical rather than a metaphysical religion: symbols would not represent cosmic principles but historical events (the way the unleavened bread in the Jewish feast of Passover does not represent any cosmic principle but the historical experience of the haste with which the Israelites had to leave Egypt when God told them it was time).

Along the same lines, Indologists tell their students: "The Sanskrit word *dakshina* means both 'right-hand side' and 'South'. That is because the Aryans came from the West, so that the South was on their right-hand side." This reduction of an element of Vedic language to the Aryan Invasion experience quite mistakenly assumes that the Aryans, in whose collective career the actual invasions could have been only a brief episode, totally subordinated their sense of space to the direction of this one campaign of conquest. Moreover, the entry from Afghanistan into Panjab and Sindh is more a southward than an eastward journey; even the eastward part through the Khybar pass etc. is not a straight road at all, but successively points to just about every direction. There is not only no literary indication, but in fact not even the reasonable geographical possibility that the supposed Aryan Invasion was conceived as a pure "strike East" campaign.

What may clinch the issue, is the fact that in the Semitic languages too, the word for "right-hand side" (Hebrew *yamin*) is the same as the word for "South", as in the Arabic country name *Yemen*, i.e. "the South (of the Arabian peninsula)". The direction of the rising sun is a logical point of *orient*-ation for every one, regardless of the direction of any migrations.

Even the outstanding Dutch philosopher and Sanskritist Frits Staal has swallowed a little bit of the voguish ethnic interpretation

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[50] *Tantra*, p.59.
[51] *ibid.*, p.214.

of Vedic ritual: "In an early period, the Vedic Aryans made their way, fighting, into the Indian subcontinent, from the West to the East, and carried the fire with them. In the *agni-pranayana* rite, the fire is still carried from West to East." Mercifully, he adds that, contrary to Mr. Van Lysebeth's opinion, Vedic ritual is not a commemoration of this invasion. With reference to a warlike hymn to Indra, off-hand interpreted as celebrating the Aryan Invasion, and still chanted in the course of the *agni-pranayana* ritual, he writes: "But the priests are not commemorating the conquests of their ancestors, of which they actually knew nothing. The function of the hymn has not changed, but has become ritual, i.e. it has lost its [meaning]."[52]

Here again, the identification of the West-East direction does not fit the actual geography of the supposed Aryan Invasion, and is an unnecessary superimposition of a specific (and unsubstantiated) historical connotation on a widespread practice of orientation. Thus, traditional Christian churches are also directed to the east, so that the light of the rising sun at Easter (i.e. spring equinox) falls on the consecrated wafer which the priest holds up. Of course, this was a christianized adaptation of a Pagan practice, preserved by Roman, Germanic etc. "Aryans" who are supposed to have invaded Europe not from the West but from the East, and by other nations to which no invasion has been attributed.

But Mr. Van Lysebeth is cocksure that Hindu ritual and symbolism is all about the struggle between Aryan invaders and Dravidians: "India is a volcano where the pressure mounts under the crust constituted by the millennary Aryan structure... Shiva's trident is 'officially' the three *gunas* of Samkhya, or the three *nadis* (subtle energy channels) of yoga. But for those who *know*, it is all different, for the trident was the preferred weapon of the Dravidians, while its Aryan counterpart had four teeth. The Rgveda says: 'With their four-teethed weapon (*chaturashri*) Mitra and Varuna kill the bearers of the trident.' The Indian Rajmohan Nath... comments on this verse: 'This gives an indication of the ancient conflict between the two camps which still continues in India.'"[53] All this cosmic symbolism is just a cover-up of historical indicators of a vast ethnic struggle.

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[52] F. Staal: *Zin en Onzin in Filosofie, Religie en Wetenschap*, p.310.
[53] *Tantra*, p.211, with reference to Rajmohan Nath: *Rigveda Summary*, p.83.

The supposed ethnic divide is said to coincide with what Mr. Van Lysebeth presents as the profound cultural dichotomy of not only Indian society, but even of the ancient culture in the entire area from Lanka and Assam to Ireland and Portugal: the sharp opposition between the native "matriarchal" religion, which in India somehow involved the father-god Shiva, and the foreign and imposed "patriarchal" religion. When we make a typological classification of religions, we find that these two cults belong in the same category, different from the category to which Islam and Christianity belong. Both the worship of sky-gods and that of earth-goddesses are based on an *interpretation* of (or rather an interaction with) *reality*; by contrast, Islam and Christianity are based on a *belief* in a particular *revelation*.

The "naturalistic" worship of either sky-gods or earth-goddesses is the pre-scientific form of what the founders of modern science (Bacon, Galilei, Kepler, Newton) called the *Liber Mundi*, the "book of the world". It is a vision of the world with its natural laws as a more reliable and more universal "revelation of God" in contrast with the exclusive "revealed scriptures" in which Christianity and Islam believed. In what Christian theologians disparagingly describe as "nature worship", the starting-point of religion is the human experience of *reality*. The divine must not be sought in the uncontrollable messages of "voices" heard by people of doubtful sanity, but in our common experience of reality.

In the real world, different elements can strike us as revealing the "power of the Creator", or the "mystery of being", or the "secret of life" etc., partly depending on our actual relations with our material environment. Thus, it is logical that agriculturists (and in fact all mothers and fathers and children) will be struck by the mysterious processes of fertility. Those who live closely to wild animals, or who make a living from domestic animals, may see the vital power of an animal species as the locus of a divine presence. For most, the awe-inspiring phenomena of heaven, notably sunshine, rain, the stars, thunder and lightning, give a taste of the transcendence of the divine in relation to the small and fleeting world beneath. Finally, more advanced and reflective people will be struck by the sublime character of the inner phenomenon of *consciousness*. In all these approaches no prophets are needed: reality is there for everyone, though people will naturally get to see it from different angles.

Now, suppose that there was indeed a clash of cultures with separate foci for their religions: farmers worshipping the earth as a goddess, warriors worshipping the awe-inspiring thunder-god as their model, and ascetics who consider their own consciousness as divine enough. Then we find that nothing stands in the way of their co-existence and mutual absorption. Indeed, we see how the pre-Greek goddess Hera "married" the Greek sky-god Dyaus/Zeus.

The best example would be the "Hindu synthesis", in which, according to the currently dominant version, the Aryan gods were blended with and partly replaced by the "native" gods and goddesses, and how a co-existence was organized between the Aryan, Brahmanic ritualist tradition, the native Tantric ritualist tradition, and the also-native consciousness-exploring ascetic tradition. This synthesis does not exist between Islam and its neighbours, or between Christianity and its neighbours (though at least Catholicism has christianized some Pagan elements, such as the mother goddess Mary, which Protestantism has thrown out again). The exclusive revelations of the Bible and the Qur'an are incompatible with other views (and with each other), but 'naturalistic' and 'mystical' traditions are all based on partial views of the one reality.

Mr. Van Lysebeth makes much of the generally accepted opposition between the Vedic cult of nature's forces and the phalloktenic (*lingam-yoni*) cult traced back to Harappan culture. Both these cults have existed among the most diverse peoples. The Bible attests that the ancient Hebrews of the age of the Patriarchs (supposedly as nomadic as the Aryans) used to solemnize their oaths by putting the hand "under the hip". Stone lingams have been found in many countries, not only in the places in the Dravidian-Mediterranian belt where Mr. Van Lysebeth has photographed some full-size instances.

On the other hand, people have always sensed the divine presence in thunder and lightning, rain and sunshine, moon and stars. Moreover, they have also considered sexuality as the profane activity par excellence, as a topic for dirty jokes, as the very opposite of awe-inspiring religious experience. And this view is just as legitimate as the view of the phallus-worshippers, since both are based on partial but genuine experiences of reality. The polite convention of avoiding the mentioning of the genitals by name could be traced as well to the awe which the mysteries of fertility have inspired, as to the utter profanity of the subject. At any rate, there is

nothing mutually exclusive between the sky cult and the lingam cult.

1.15. Indra and Shiva

The two cults, of the sky phenomena and of the lingam, have been identified with two gods: the "Aryan" sky-god Indra and the "pre-Aryan" lingam god Shiva. In Mortimer Wheeler's famous words, *"Indra stands accused"* of destroying the Shaivite Harappan civilization, only to be outdone by Shiva's greater mass appeal a few centuries later. However, when we study these two divine characters, we find that they are not so different.

Shiva is usually identified with the Vedic god Rudra. It so happens that Indra's and Rudra's domains are more or less the same: both are thundering sky gods. The destructive aspect of Rudra/Shiva is paralleled in Indra's epithet *purandara*, "the fortress-destroyer". In mythology, Indra is, like Shiva, a bit of an outsider, who is in conflict with the other gods, shunned by them and even by his mother, left alone by them to fight the dragon, doing things that disrupt the world order. Christians who like to picture Jesus as the friend of the outcasts, may like to know that the despised "Aryan racist god" Indra is in fact on the side of the outcasts: "Indra, you lifted up the outcast who was oppressed, you glorified the blind and the lame" (Rg-Veda 2:13:12). As David Frawley has shown, Indra has many epithets and attributes which were later associated with Shiva: the dispeller of fear, the lord of *maya* (enchantment), the truth, the dancer.[54]

Shiva and Indra are both associated with intoxication. Indra is praised as having a tremendous appetite for the psychedelic *soma* juice, and Shiva, fond of *bhang*, is sometimes depicted as a *chillum*-smoking sadhu. Intoxication, considered by its adepts as a divine state, is a *tamasik* condition, associated with Shiva as the *tamasik* (darkness-oriented) member of the divine *trimurti*. Shiva has *Soma-Shiva* as one of his aspects, a name containing one of those brahminical etymology games: Soma is the Vedic intoxicant, it is also the moon (as in *Somwar*, "mon-day"), which is part of Shiva's iconography; but it is also analyzed as a *sandhi* contraction of *sa-Uma*, "with (his consort) Uma". The "Shiva with his consort" is a benevolent Shiva, only when on his own is he a terrible god.

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[54] D. Frawley: *Gods, Sages and Kings*, p.224-225.

The now-popular theory that Shiva is a non-Vedic and anti-Vedic god, is based on the Puranic story of the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice. Daksha is the father of Shiva's beloved Sati: he rebukes Shiva, Sati commits suicide, and Shiva vents his anger by disturbing the sacrifice which Daksha is conducting. Daksha refuses to worship Shiva because Shiva is *vedabahya*, "outside the Vedas". As David Frawley shows, this story is quite parallel to the Vedic story of Indra stealing the *soma* from Tvashtr and even killing Tvashtr, and to the Vedic story of Rudra killing Prajapati. In each case, a god that disrupts or "destroys" the world order, is seen to defeat a god representing the process of creation, a process which is equated with the process of sacrifice (the Creator creates the world by sacrificing). The destroyer-god, himself a cornerstone of the created world, destroys the creative sacrifice.

David Frawley restores these stories to their traditional metaphysical interpretation (rather than their ethnic-historical distortion). The Self, the conscious subject, is the destroyer of creation: as receptive emptiness, consciousness is the antipode and negation of creation's fullness. "The sacrifice is merely a symbol for the negation of all things into the divine. The sacrifice has to be negated in order for it to be fulfilled. The sacrifice is the cosmic process or time that must be transcended for the understanding of the eternal. Tvashtr is the outer god of form, like Daksha, while Indra like Shiva represents the inner god of spiritual knowledge."

There is nothing un-Aryan about Shiva's or Indra's outsider status: "Indra and Shiva represent the sage who is above the outer laws, including those of caste and stage of life... In fact, in the Vedas the Aryan people themselves are often portrayed as outcasts, minorities, as oppressed, in a world filled with hostile people who would destroy them ('Full of manifold evils are the people of men', 3:18:1). Thus the myth of the outcast, whether Indra or Shiva, is the myth of the Aryan, the man who goes against the outer social and world order and appearance to affirm the truth of the spirit."[55]

In this viewpoint of Frawley's, I sense a pro-outcast and anti-establishment bias, betraying a background influence of modern-Christian pro-outcast rhetoric (what is so very Christian about glorifying the outsider, is the implication that "the world is bad"). There is no apriori reason to "go against the world order": the world order

[55] D. Frawley: *op.cit.*, p.226.

(personified as Varuna, later as Vishnu, the upholder of the established institutions) is not something we can do away with, except when transcending it in yogic practice (withdrawing consciousness from all sensory and mental objects, i.e. from the world). Even so, the outsider is also a legitimate, even crucial boundary component of the world order, just like the *sannyasin* (renunciate) is the indispensible boundary component of the *varnashramadharma* (system of specific norms of each social function and age-group). At any rate, the outsider role of Shiva in the Puranic pantheon is the continuation of Indra's role in the Vedic pantheon.

Shiva also continues Indra's role of warrior-god. Till today, many Shiva sadhus are proficient in the martial arts. The Shaiva war-cry *Hara Hara Mahadeva* is still used by some regiments of the Indian army. It is a very effective battlefield *mantra* instilling fear in the enemies of Hinduism, as was clear from the secularists' demand to cut out the *Hara Hara Mahadeva* sequences from the *Chanakya* TV-serial (broadcast in truncated version on Doordarshan in 1992).

Moreover, *shiva*, "the auspicious one", is an epithet of not only Rudra (in whose case it sounds a bit paradoxical) but of Vedic gods in general. Indra himself is called *shiva* several times (Rg-Veda 2:20:3, 6:45:17, 8:93:3). Shiva is by no means a non-Vedic god. And Indra never really disappeared from popular Hinduism but lives on under another name.

Finally, if Shiva is associated with the *lingam*, it may be interesting to know that Indra himself has a similar connotation. Indra as the god of the atmospheric elements, including the life-giving rain, has an obvious relevance to fertilization, thus to the lingam. His weapon is the *vajra*, the thunderbolt; in Tibetan symbolism, the *vajra* is related to the male organ just like the bell is related to the female organ. The derivative noun *indriya* means organ, i.e. sense organs (*jnanendriya*) and action organs (*karmendriya*: mouth, hands, legs, genitals and anus), and is sometimes used specifically for the male organ. Indra is not exclusively associated with the male organ as the fertilizer, but is more broadly related to the fertilization processes in nature; and the same counts for Shiva, who is not only associated with the lingam, but is also the source from whose hair the life-giving Ganga river springs. There is only a geographical difference: Indra is more often associated with the Saraswati, Shiva with the Ganga.

1.16. Non-Vedic concepts in Hinduism

It has become a commonplace belief that the typical Indian concepts, those that make up the most distinctive and attractive component of Indian civilization, are non-Vedic and derived from pre-Aryan culture. Reincarnation and karma, yogic practice, the notion of "liberation" (*moksha*, *nirvana*): these are supposed to be pre-Aryan elements which were revived after some centuries of Aryan dominance.

Let us note first of all that the acceptance of the Aryan Invasion theory does not necessitate this attribution to "pre-Aryans" of all the ideas and practices which are not clearly attested in the Vedas. Thus, Frits Staal, who does not question the Invasion theory, describes Heinrich Zimmer, an exponent of this ethnic division of Indian thought, as "the author of an original but one-sided description of Indian philosophies — based on an interpretation not free of racial prejudice: according to Zimmer, there is in Indian thought an opposition between the monist Vedanta philosophy which stems from the Vedic Aryans and the realistic dualism of Jainism and Buddhism which he links with the 'original' Dravidian India."[56] He dismisses this as "romantic ideas not verified in reality".

We should also keep in mind that the notions of *punarjanma* (rebirth), *karma*, *moksha* and *yoga*, which are now clustered into one single philosophy, may have separate origins. Many people, tribal as well as modern, believe in reincarnation but have no notion of a "liberation" from the cycle of reincarnations, nor of meditation as a method towards this escape. Forms of meditation have been developed in cultures that did not believe in reincarnation (e.g. Taoism). The Catholic notion of reward or punishment in the hereafter according to one's good or bad conduct in the present life is a type of *karma* theory, but without reincarnation. These four notions can be conceived separately, and may have been brought together from different ethnic or social or religious sources. Moreover, the institution of Shramanism, celibate monkhood, often conceived as the social setting for the world-view containing the above-mentioned concepts, can in its turn have originated separately from these particular philosophical notions.

In fact, for some of the above notions, a Vedic genealogy has been plausibly demonstrated, while others can indeed not be

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[56] F. Staal: *op.cit.*, p.15.

traced in the Vedic scriptures. The word ***karma*** is of course the Vedic term for "ritual activity", "a ritual", and its later meaning of "causal relation between successive incarnations" has been shown to have developed from late-Vedic ritualism. The *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* (4:4:5-6) says that ***karma*** is what determines good or evil rebirth. There, ***karma*** still has or at least includes the sense of "ritual action" rather than ethical action, but it gets coupled with the separate notion of reincarnation, which cannot be traced to the Vedas and is acknowledged in the Upanishads as coming from people outside the circle of active practitioners of Vedic rituals. The link between ***karma*** as ritualism and the belief in ***karma*** as causality across death and rebirth could be the belief (dated to the Brahmana period) in the inexorable mechanical efficacity of rituals: if these do not have the desired effect in this life (which must have happened often), it must be that they will have their effect on a later occasion, when somehow you will still be there to enjoy it.

The notion of karma and of reincarnation has not been attested among the early Dravidian populations of India. It has been argued that the early Tamils did not believe in reincarnation: "Before the coming of the Aryan ideas, the Tamils did not believe in reincarnation. Rather, like many archaic peoples, they had shadowy and inconsistent ideas of what happens to the spirits of the dead."[57]

The notion of reincarnation may well have developed from Vedic thought. The Vedic notion of an afterlife similar to the present life may have given rise to the speculation of a second death: if the afterlife is so similar, should it not include death as well? And another afterlife in yet another world (viz. this our own world) as well? From re-death to re-birth. At any rate, a simple look at the life cycles in nature could give any imaginative person the idea of reincarnation, so that it effectively appears in many cultures. In his survey of reincarnation beliefs around the world, the Dutch scholar Hans Ten Dam reports that in all continents, people have believed in reincarnation (e.g. more than 100 Black African nations).[58] Many of these peoples were unrelated, and stumbled upon the notion of reincarnation independently, without needing the pre-Aryan Indians to tell them about it.

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[57] George L. Hart, III: "The Theory of Reincarnation among the Tamils", in Wendy Doniger: *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, p.116.
[58] H. Ten Dam: *Ring van Licht* (Bres, Amsterdam 1990), p.45 ff.

What about the non-Dravidian tribals? Missionary sources active in the Chhotanagpur area emphasize that non-belief in reincarnation is one of the decisive "differences between tribals and Hindus". With their greed for the souls of the tribals, they may be less than truthful about tribal beliefs, and anthropologists give a rather different account. Robert Parkin writes that the Munda tribals believe in reincarnation, but with different implications from those in Buddhism and mainstream Hinduism, esp. because of the "absence of an ethical component", so that "it is the manner of one's death, not the worth of one's life, that is the qualification for rebirth". For the Mundas, "reincarnation is of course an object of desire here, not of dread".[59]

Given the compulsions of the Aryan Invasion theory, there is no lack of apriori assumptions that "tribal" sages of the Ganga plains, the later working-area of Buddha and Mahavira (present-day Bihar), must have been the originators of the belief in reincarnation.[60] But to such theories, indologist Wendy Doniger has aptly said: "But since we know virtually nothing about these hypothetical sages other than our own defining assumption that they were not Vedic, it might be argued that 'tribal' is merely a scholarly way of saying 'we do not know who they were'."[61] Mrs. Doniger herself believes that "the theory of rebirth does not appear in the Vedas", but that "the idea of karma in its broader sense (including the concept of merit transfer) may well have preceded the idea of rebirth, giving strong grounds for postulating Vedic origins of the karma theory".[62]

Separately from claims about the origins of karma and reincarnation, it has been argued that *Shramanism*, the phenomenon of men withdrawing from the world to devote themselves to ascetic practices for achieving "liberation", was a feature of the Stone Age culture which existed in the Ganga basin until just a few centuries before the Buddha (and which has continued in remote areas until recently).

Within the Aryan Invasion framework, the assumption that asceticism or *Shramanism* originates in a pre-Aryan Ganga culture,

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[59] R. Parkin: *The Munda of Central India. An Account of their Social Organization*, p.222.

[60] E.g., Gananath Obeyesekere: "The rebirth Eschatology and its Transformations: A Contribution to the Sociology of Early Buddhism", in Wendy Doniger ed.: *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, esp. p. 137-138.

[61] W. Doniger ed.: *op.cit.*, p.xiii.

[62] *ibid.*, p.3.

i.e. neither in Aryan nor in Harappan civilization, makes perfect sense.[63] In fact, it stands to reason that hallowed sacred places like Prayag and Benares have their status since millennia, certainly before about 1000 BC when the Aryan invaders are supposed to have colonized this area. If one accepts the general outline of the Aryan Invasion theory, then there is nothing in known "Aryan" history that explains the fact of Benares' supreme sancity, so one almost has to assume that somehow the Ganga plain was the pre-Aryan source land of Hindu spirituality. At the same time, the notions of reincarnation, yoga practice and liberation (*moksha*) appear only (at least, so it is argued) when the Sanskrit sources attest a familiarity with the Ganga area, centuries after the Indus/Saraswati basin with its disappearing Harappan culture had been known: the Vedic people did not have these notions, eventhough they are supposed to have incorporated the Harappan population in their society. Within the Aryan Invasion framework, it is quite plausible that the Ganga area, though having a little-developed material culture, brought the most spiritual notions into Hindu culture.

What pleads against this "tribal" origin of Shramanism, is firstly that we have no evidence of Shramanism in the present-day "non-Hindu" tribal populations, and secondly that its pessimistic spirit seems typical of an urban and not at all of a tribal culture. But then, we may have been misinformed when we were told by archaeologists that the Ganga plain was still in the Stone Age at the time of the presumed Aryan expansion. Though less rich in archaeological remains than the Indus culture, the contemporary Ganga culture may have been developed enough. The Germanic and Celtic peoples were not as barbaric as Roman sources would have us believe, but they built less durable wooden structures and have not left us a *Forum Romanum* as proof of their civilization; maybe the Ganga culture too is underestimated and wrongly described as tribal. On the other hand, even if this was a tribal culture, we may have to question the assumption that tribals have to be enthusiastic nature-worshippers incapable of radical doubt. The fact that till today it is precisely the sadhus who walk naked or paint their bodies, like the most stereotypical "primitives", could also be invoked as an indication of the tribal origins of the institution of the *parivrajaka* (wandering ascetic).

[63] This theory is accepted by Gananath Obeyesekere, with reference to D.D. Kosambi, in *op.cit.*

Even the monks' celibacy has been argued to be of tribal origin. Developed agricultural societies frowned upon the waste of productive and procreative potential which monkhood implied (as illustrated in the Confucian pro-family polemic against celibate Buddhism), while they were willing and able to feed ever-larger numbers of people. By contrast, primitive tribes were more limited in their capacity to make the same territory feed ever more people, and therefore they practised forms of population control, even killing unwanted babies (which was also practised by the Romans and other agricultural nations, but only when the child was deformed or suspected of having been illegitimately conceived, and not in order to limit the population). Like human sacrifice, celibacy could be explained as a symptom of the tribal society's unconcern for population growth. Since ancient Indian history is a free-for-all, why not reduce the celibate life of Liberation seekers to a birth-control ploy?

Whatever our theories and conjectures, there is nothing intrinsically impossible about this scenario of Shramanism originating in the "pre-Aryan Ganga culture". It is a different matter that there is no positive proof for it. If we accept it, the fact is still that a sociological and ideological synthesis of Vedic-Tantric ritualism and this Gangetic asceticism (***karmakand*** and ***jnanakand***) was achieved. The Shramanic culture was not destroyed but integrated, and continues till today.

In most books on the Harappan culture, a lot of speculation is built on a single Harappan finding, the so-called *Pashupati* seal. It depicts a man with a strange headwear sitting in lotus posture and surrounded by animals. Though not well visible, he seems to have three faces, which may mean that he is a three-faced god, or that he is a four-faced god with the back face undepictable on a two-dimensional surface. The common speculation is that this is Shiva in his *Pashupati* ("lord of beasts") aspect, and that his lotus posture proves the familiarity of Harappan culture with yoga practice.

I am convinced that Harappan culture was familiar with the god Shiva (though not necessarily under that name), and quite probably also with yoga: Hindu culture is indeed more than 4,000 years old, and the Harappan culture was never replaced with something radically new, but already contained the essential elements of classical Hinduism. However, it does not follow that this famous seal depicts Shiva in a yoga posture. Many tailors with no

knowledge of yoga use this position for sitting comfortably; this is no proof of any familiarity with yoga. And many known and unknown divinities or mythological characters could be depicted with the attributes mentioned.

It has been opined that the animals signify the totems of different tribes, who all pay their allegiance to the common god, so that the provisional name *Pashupati* would effectively mean "the all-tribes god"; this would go well with Shiva's designation as Mahadev, "the great god", but this explanation is by no means proven. S.R. Rao has claimed that it is Agni, the fire-god: to him all the animals pay their respect, because they are afraid of the fire, the use of which is a human privilege (in Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Books*, the animals call fire by its taboo-avoiding name, "the red flower"); and in the Vedas, Agni has three aspects, here shown as three faces. Or again, the tribal totems may apply here as well: all tribes honour the fire cult. Other explanations are possible; at any rate, one should not accept the "Shiva Pashupati in yoga posture" too readily.

It is commonly assumed that yoga is not mentioned in the Vedas, and that references to Vedic texts by yogis are a (mostly metaphorical) projection of later concepts onto the old texts. Thus, the *Gayatri mantra* is "merely" a hymn to the naturalist sun god, who is asked to enlighten our minds. But the very fact that our state of mind is thematized in this mantra is used to suggest that the mantra does have a yogic meaning, that the sun-god signifies the Brahman, and that the Vedas contain a lot of profound metaphors in general. The Veda contains numerous passages that can simply not be understood except in a metaphorical sense. Whether these metaphors refer to yogic experiences, as many Hindu authors claim, is yet another matter; but the common assumption that the Vedic hymns only refer to crude phenomena of physical nature is equally unproven.

The ritualism attested in the Vedas and esp. the Brahmanas is often contrasted with the consciousness discipline of the later Upanishadic and heterodox schools. Genuine philosophy is deemed far superior and foreign to the puerile ritualism of the Vedas. However, I have never yet heard of a practitioner of yoga (or Zen Buddhism, etc.) who did not also practise some kind of ritual. The common condition is that their meditative practice is surrounded by ritual prescriptions. There are also a number of

practices intermediate between ritual and meditation, e.g. *pranayama*, the ritualization of breathing; and *mantra*, the ritual repetition of incantations intended to make the mind one-pointed.

Before Harappa was discovered, the internal evidence of Hindu literature led scholars to assume an internal development from an emphasis on ritualism (*karmakand*) to an emphasis on spiritual knowledge (*jnanakand*). They never noticed a hiatus in this reconstruction which made it necessary to postulate an outside influence. In the typically Tantric or Shramanic vocabulary, no non-Aryan presence has been discovered till today. At most, one could say (in consonance with the evidence of the oldest Sanskrit semi-historical literature, the Puranas) that the Vedic Aryans were not the only Aryans, and that the Vedic religion with its fire-sacrifice was just one (for some reason the most prestigious one) in a continuum of related Aryan traditions. The contrast between these varieties within Hinduism has never been shown to coincide with an Aryan-Dravidian opposition.

The relations between Veda and Tantra, between *Karmakand* and *Jnanakand*, between Brahmanism and Shramanism, are deep and important subjects which deserve further discussion. For now, we simply note that the clear-cut opposition between the two poles in these pairs is not doing justice to reality, and that an ethnic interpretation of these supposed oppositions is even less warranted.

1.17. Caste

Mr. Van Lysebeth believes that Hindu society, and especialy the institution of caste, is a horrible continuation of an ancient Hitlerian regime. He suggests that Hindus themselves are aware of the utter illegitimacy of their society: "Hindus avoid to talk about this burning topic [of caste] with foreigners and, every time that I have brought it up, they cunningly evade the real question."[64]

Further on, Mr. Van Lysebeth will quote several Indian opinions on and explanations of caste, so they had not been avoiding the topic altogether. But Mr. Van Lysebeth's "real question" which no Hindu had cared to go into, was the racial basis of caste: "[A travelling swami] will say that the system is based on *dharma*, statutory duty or profession. Mind you, he will carefully avoid to attach any link with racism to it." Hindus have no notion of this racial basis, and so they did not oblige Mr. Van Lysebeth when he

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[64] *Tantra*, p.46.

was eager to hear some good racist rhetoric on the subject of caste. But when someone believes in a delusion, and finds that many people "feign to" ignore this delusion, he will grimly claim to have discovered a conspiracy.

Mr. Van Lysebeth has the good sense to draw attention to the two separate concepts of *jati* and *varna*, which Europeans have lumped together in the Portuguese term *casta*. But the next thing he does is to re-equate them, this time as terms of racial purity: "The Sanskrit term *jati*, which designates what we call the castes, means 'race', neither more nor less. It's simple, it's clear."[65] And: "The prime criterion of discrimination, purely racial, is *varna*, a Sanskrit word meaning colour (evidently of the skin)."[66]

The word *jati* literally means "birth", therefrom "a group into which one is born, to which one belongs by birth". Race is a class of people to which one belongs by birth. But so is the family, and so is mankind (*manavajati*). The word is etymologically cognate to the Latin word *gens*, "clan", an exogamous family grouping roughly equivalent to the Indian *gotra*. Narrowing down this prime meaning of *jati* to "race" is unwarranted, biased and mischievous. And when we talk about *jati* in the context of the caste system, it is at any rate not this basic meaning which we intend, but a more specialized meaning: endogamous group. You are not merely born into a *jati* (as you are into a family or a race), you also marry and procreate within the *jati*. This involves a conscious assent to keeping up *jati* separateness, but does not presuppose that the *jati* is distinguished by any recognizable racial characteristic.

The word *varna* has been given different etymologies, such as "covering", therefore "paint", therefore "colour"; and more usually "choice", "one among an array of options", therefore "distinguishing quality", one's "colour" in a figurative sense. The second explanation seems to be the best, but let us not bother about the ultimate roots and settle for the commonly accepted sense "colour". That this should mean "skin colour" may seem "evident" to Mr. Van Lysebeth, but it is not. A clue in the literary tradition: Kshatriyas like Krishna and Rama have always been described as dark-skinned, Draupadi as a model of dark-skinned beauty, and the Brahmana king Ravana as stark black.

Consider another use of the word *varna*: "letter of the alpha-

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[65] *ibid.*, p.46.
[66] *ibid.*, p.47.

bet" (alphabet = *varna-mala*). Just like colours are the elements in the visual spectrum, so the phonemes of the language are the elements of (the semantically useful part of) the sound spectrum.[67] And similarly, the different functions in society are elements in the social spectrum. Colour means: one in a spectrum. We know how the "three qualities" (*guna*) of Samkhya philosophy are also represented by colours, usually white for *sattva* (the pure, transparent), red for *rajas* (the dynamic, distorted), black for *tamas* (the dark, inert). In Jaina philosophy, the quality of people's *karma* is divided in six categories named after colours (*leshya*): black, blue, grey, red, yellow, white, with colourlessness as the karmic colour of the liberated soul. Within the Sanskritic context, it is not at all far-fetched to assume that the word *varna* is used metaphorically in the sense of "one of the elements in the set of functions in society".

The *varnas* or functions in society may meaningfully be represented by colours, regardless of their personnel's selection procedure or skin colour. The Brahmana function is white: things of the mind are untainted by matter, and ideally people filling this role in society should be incorruptible (pure, "white") to preserve the value of words as carriers of truth.

The Kshatriya function is red: universally acknowledged as the colour of passion and blood, it signifies the martial side of this social role; red is also the "signal" colour par excellence, thus it represents the frontal leadership role which this class is expected to take.

The Vaishya function is yellow: later this may have been seen as the colour of gold, therefore of money, but originally it may have indicated the ripe harvest. Contrary to frontal and courageous red, yellow is the colour of the middle of the road, of the people who "have a yellow streak" and are not interested in taking a heroic role, the common citizenry.

The Shudra function is black: it is the dirty work, the nameless servile work. Black is strictly the absence of colour: similarly, no specific qualification is needed to make it to Shudra status. On the other hand, black is the colour suggestive of the unfathomable hidden power, which is indeed ascribed to the untainted Shudras.

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[67] Similarly, the Greek word *stoikheion*, "one in a row", means "letter of the alphabet", "phoneme", "one in a set of principles", "one in the spectrum of the five elements".

Theorists of the racial basis of caste should explain where the red-skinned and yellow-skinned classes come from. Perhaps they were meant as shades of brown, so that Brahmins were pure whites, Shudras pure blacks, and Kshatriyas and Vaishyas mixed-blood browns? Apart from not tallying with the caste-wise distribution of skin colour observed in reality, this poses the problem that the "yellow" caste is lower in the caste hierarchy than the obviously darker "red" caste.

For romantic race theorists of a bygone century, these colours may have signified the typical quality of the races of mankind: mankind's far-sighted Brahmanas were of course the white race, the Red Indians are known for their courage and qualify as mankind's Kshatriyas, the Chinese are calculating businessmen and obviously mankind's Vaishya race, and the Blacks are the servile Shudra race. The reader will agree that we have no use for such constructions and that they do not provide any serious explanation of the term *varna* in the context of the Hindu caste system.

The *varna* system is an idealized and schematic description of the necessary functions in every society. What is special in Hindu society is that these roles are strictly divided, so that theoretically no one can combine two of these roles; and that they are tied to the *jati* system of hereditary functions preserved through endogamous marriage. Not the idealized *varna* division but the all-pervading and inescapably hereditary division in endogamous groups or *jatis* constitutes the most typical and to many the most horrifying aspect of the caste system.

We need not comment on Van Lysebeth's misconception, common among Westerners, that the four *varnas* are coterminous with four *jatis*, i.e. that they form four solid endogamous groups, when in fact they are subdivided in numerous mutually exclusive *jatis*. Then again, he does acknowledge that the *varnas* are subdivided in professional groups. Anyway, let us see how the *varnas* are interpreted as races.

The three upper castes, the "twice-born" (*dwija*) who are entitled to wearing the sacred thread and to studying the Vedas, are described as "the Aryans, the 'pale-faces'". The fourth caste, the Shudras, "serfs descended of the defeated ones, forcibly incorporated in the Aryan system as the fourth class". Finally, "the outcastes, excluded from the system, unworthy even of being slaves, the untouchables" are the "descendents of unsubdued tribals". Sum-

ming up, "that then is the five-fold division of the system, based on race, which one enters only by birth".[68]

1.18. The backward castes

Let us take a look at these caste groups, and start with the last-mentioned group, the untouchables. The term "unsubdued tribals" could hardly apply to people brutally forced into the lowliest jobs, but was probably intended to mean "unsubmissive tribals": those who fought hard and were punished most severely after having been subdued with great effort. This is a generalization of the story commonly told of the Chandala untouchables: unrelenting fighters who ended up as a caste of funeral personnel.

As much as by incorrect assertions, this racial explanation of caste is sinning by omission. Thus, it leaves out the role of purity rules, which had a life of their own dictated by non-sociological religious developments, and which, upon becoming harder, forced many otherwise integrated professional groups (not freshly subdued tribals) into untouchability. Thus, there have always been leather-workers (*Charmakars*, now *Chamars*), who were not untouchables according to ancient literary sources, but who *have become* an untouchable caste, probably because of the increasing valuation of vegetarianism and cow-protection and the concomitant increase in the impurity of Chamar work. The Chamar women are traditionally employed as midwives, an equally "impure" profession: it is obvious that the "Aryans" resorted to midwifery long before their victories against tribals. So, some castes were fully integrated in Aryan society, and only became untouchable under the impact of changing values, esp. the increasingly obsessive concept of purity.

A second omission is the impact of the enemies of Hindu society on caste relations. Hindu society as the British scholars and census officers found it, was the tired and wounded survivor of a millennium-long battle with Islam. People who are on the defensive, have no time for reform and progress, but conserve and harden their traditions. In a society that was economically bled for centuries by crippling taxes (*jizya*), scarcity exacerbated competition and group egoism.[69] Under the foreign yoke, the higher

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[68] *Tantra*, p.47.
[69] On the socio-economic effects of Islamic rule, see Prof. K.S. Lal: *Legacy of Muslim Rule in India*, Aditya Prakashan, Delhi 1992.

classes weighed more heavily on the lower classes than ever before. Isolation and retreat into the bastion of one's own caste was a social defence by Hindu society against the persistent Islamic terror. So, while caste is definitely a homegrown Hindu institution, much of its harshness was the effect of the Islamic onslaught.

Moreover, several castes have fallen to a state of untouchability due to specific Islamic innovations. The sweeper caste sank badly in status once they were forced to carry human excreta on their heads, due to the Islamic innovation of in-house lavatories (an implication of the *pardah* system and of the confinement of the Muslim conquerors to citadels, at least in the Sultanate period). Moreover, many temple masons who had fallen unemployed, as well as many captured warriors, were forced into doing this degrading work. Another nearly untold story is that of the low-caste people who hid in the jungles to escape the Muslim terror: many of them became "impure" semi-tribal castes who only returned to the mainstream of Hindu society during or after British rule. The number, the membership and the degree of excludedness of the untouchable castes increased substantially under the impact of Islamic rule.[70]

For theory purposes, it could also be argued that the "untouchable" castes do not form a fifth category. All those who are not Dwijas, are Shudras, members of the fourth varna. The untouchables do not form a separate varna, because untouchability is a relative concept, not limited to one category but extending in different degrees to every one. One caste may be untouchable for a second caste, but not for a third. Moreover, even high-caste people are untouchable at times: menstruating women are for most practical purposes untouchable, and even a Brahmin who has not yet taken his bath is not allowed to recite the Veda for fear of polluting it. Nevertheless, the separate status of the untouchables, as well as the term *avarna*, "without *varna*", has been effective for centuries. Their impurity differs from that of others by being considered inborn and hereditary, a fairly crucial difference. Mahatma Gandhi called them *Harijan*, "people of God", while Dr. Ambedkar called them "Depressed" castes, a term later translated as *Dalit*. Western-

[70] In general, Mr. Van Lysebeth, like most detractors of Hinduism, ignores the impact of Islam. Thus, he cites the authority of Nataraja Guru (who belonged to the Hindu revivalist school of Narayan Guru) to the effect that "South India is the real India": this is true to an extent, not as a matter of Dravidian vs. Aryan, but because South India was much less brutalized by Islam.

ers call them *pariahs* (after the Paraya caste of Tamil Nadu), and the Constitution classifies them as "Scheduled Castes".

As for the other Shudra castes, who nowadays call themselves "Backward", it deserves mention that today the majority of the atrocities on Harijans is not committed by upper-caste people, certainly not by Brahmins, but by the intermediate-caste people, who currently describe themselves as "Other Backward Castes", and even more by Muslims (but then it gets classified as anti-Hindu rather than anti-Harijan violence). Mr. Van Lysebeth himself mentions some gruesome examples, including the Belchi massacre (of Indira fame) of untouchables by Kurmis, a Backward Caste.[71]

I have often noticed for myself how these Backwards keep up their caste distinctions vis-a-vis the Scheduled Castes where "progressive" upper-caste people have given them up altogether. For instance, in a house in Benares where I used to stay, the landlord was a Brahmin, and the cook was a Chamar woman. Everyone in the house, inmates and visitors, Indians and foreigners, ate the food made by this Chamar woman. One day, a Kahar woman we knew, confided to us with indignation that this landlord was offering food made by a "dirty Chamar woman". She was surprised to find that we knew but didn't care.

Or take the following true story. A Chamar protested when a tea vendor served him in a glass kept separate from the others. The vendor explained that he could not serve other people in a glass from which a Chamar had drunk. The Chamar called the police, because practising untouchability is illegal. Meanwhile, the vendor called a Bhangi, and when the policeman summoned the vendor to serve the Chamar in a common glass, the Bhangi poured the tea and offered it to the Chamar. But the latter refused to take the glass, because it was offered by a Bhangi even more untouchable than himself. I do not relate this story to ridicule the drive against untouchability, but merely to illustrate that the caste-related purity rules of which untouchability forms a part, were shared till recently by the whole society.

This complicity of the lower castes in the discrimination against the lowest castes is a phenomenon which any sociologist would expect: most people try to elevate themselves by looking down on others, and more intensely so as one finds oneself lower on the

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[71] *Tantra*, p.49.

social ladder and more pressed to prove oneself superior to others. But it will not deter anti-Brahminical polemists from blaming the Brahmins even for these instances of caste discrimination: in their view, it is only a measure of the Brahmins' slyness that they have managed to pit one prisoner of their system against another.

1.19. The forward castes

About the upper castes, our informer has of course nothing but bad things to say. The Kshatriyas have wasted public resources on petty warfare, on hunting and on their harems. We are informed that the Maharajas (the majority of whom, at the time of the British conquest, were actually not Kshatriyas but Shudras) have lost their privileges and their statutory income; but not that the Rajput landlords have been cut to size in successive land grabs and land reforms of the Muslims, the British and Nehru, and have often fallen on hard times. But let that pass: the description may be taken as pertaining to traditional India, the one Manu and other *Shastra* writers had in mind. Even then, something ought to have been said about their code of chivalry, about their indubitable bravery, and other such things incomprehensible to us moderns.

Next are the Vaishyas: moneylenders like the Jews, they have mercilessly exploited the people who do honest work in the sweat of their brows. Well, maybe. At any rate, every single society has classes of people of whom these things are said. The rich and the powerful, they are more or less the same everywhere, and they can safely be blamed for many things. So let us pass on to that absolutely typical Hindu phenomenon: the Brahmin.

"Aryanized India is under the thumb of the racist Brahmins, smug and full of their superiority over all other human beings, even over all of creation."[72] They set the tone for all the ills of Hindu society: "Venality, hypocrisy, callous unconcern, are the characteristic traits of the Aryans, starting with the Brahmins."[73] I wonder what would happen if he had written such things about Blacks, or Jews, or Muslims. But against Brahmins, such language will only evoke praise.

I know Brahmins in North India who are as black as Nelson Mandela, modest in life-style, friendly and attentive in their dealings with others, Brahmins and non-Brahmins alike. They consti-

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[72] *ibid.*, p.58.
[73] *ibid.*, p.62.

tute a refutation of the aforementioned picture of the "racist Brahmins, smug and full of their superiority". And I don't mean secularist ex-Brahmins, who are indeed smug and full of their superiority and very full of their power positions and concomitant privileges. The genuine Hindu Brahmins are also but human beings, and of course some of them are narrow-minded and obscurantist, true; but whatever their shortcomings, it is flatly untrue that "Aryanized India is under the thumb" of these people (see ch.4.9.).

There is one criticism which deserves closer consideration, as it is also voiced by many well-wishers of Hindu society: that "callous unconcern" is a typical trait of the "Aryans", or at least of the Hindus. Thus, N.K. Dutt writes about the plight of the East Bengali Hindus: "Today, East Bengal has become an Islamic state, and millions of Hindus have been uprooted from their hearths and homes, and become a community of homeless vagrants, and another 8 or 9 million face the alternative of complete liquidation through conversion to Islam. The rest of the Hindu community of India do not think it necessary to extend their hand of fellowship to them lest it might involve some sacrifice on their part... fellow-feeling among the Hindus is not yet born."[74]

There is certainly truth in this. To add one illustration: a Hindu living in Britain told me that in 1991, East Bengali Hindus had collected a bundle of evidence about their own plight, but could not raise the necessary funds for publication even among their own emigrants in Britain. The fact that Hindus in Islamic states feel helpless and abandoned even while Hindu moneybags are owning newspapers and other levers of power, is indeed a phenomenon that requires explanation. But from my own experience, I have little reason to attribute this trait to Hindu tradition: this lack of fellow-feeling is most conspicuous in de-hinduized urbanites, bureaucrats, "secularist" intellectuals. Callous unconcern is a very mild term to describe the behaviour of bureaucrats and employees in Indian state-affiliated companies towards the customers they are supposed to serve. Callous unconcern is much too mild a description of the secularist intellectuals' wilful deafness for the Hindu refugees from Kashmir or Bangladesh. Then again, for this ugly trait to strike such firm roots in Nehruvian India, the soil of tradi-

[74] N.K. Dutt: *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, p.311-312. Similarly, Baljit Rai: *Muslim Fundamentalism in the Indian Subcontinent*, part 5: "Hindus — their own Worst Enemy".

tional culture may indeed have to take a part of the blame.

The obvious explanation would be that the seclusion into one's caste caused a lack of interest in the life of other castes. Against that, many older people have told me that in their youth in the village they experienced a lot of fellow-feeling between members of the different castes; and that post-Independence caste politics has worsened caste relations considerably. Moreover, the above-mentioned lack of concern for the terrorized Bengali Hindus means in effect that Brahmins are neglecting their Bengali caste-fellows, that Kayasthas and Shudras are neglecting their caste-fellows: in this case, geographical distance and not caste seems to be the barrier. In ch.4.17, we will look into the case against caste from the viewpoint of Hindu self-defence in history. For the rest, we must leave this pressing question of the source of the apparent Hindu "callous unconcern" and lack of fellow-feeling (especially for fellow Hindus) for future investigation.

The stereotype which Mr. Van Lysebeth sketches of the Brahmins, is very commonly repeated in all kinds of information about Hinduism. As we shall see in ch.4, it is not at all innocent. Mr. Van Lysebeth, as well as the many journalists occassionally writing about India who convey the same ideas, do not seem to be aware that their information on and perception of the Brahmin class is the result of a deliberate anti-Brahmin campaign led by strongly purpose-conscious ideological forces, who see in the Brahmin class the backbone of a civilization which they want to destroy. Tantrism, that gross form of Hindu Paganism, is very much part of the culture which Christian and Islamic missionaries, and their allies among secularized Hindus, want to annihilate after they have got Brahminism out of the way. Mr. Van Lysebeth may not realize it, but if the Brahmins had not been there, then there would now not be a living "Tantric" tradition attracting people like himself to India. As the "leaders of idolatry", they are held responsible for the survival of Paganism in India, including that of Tantra.

1.20. Native origins of caste

About the origin of the caste system, Mr. Van Lysebeth writes that the racial explanation is not the whole story: "As for the origin of the system, it is quite probable that it was precisely the victims, the non-Aryans, who had invented it even before the onslaught of the invaders. After the conquest, the Aryans have doubtlessly

found a Dravidian society organized in professional guilds, maybe even already hereditary, a structure which they adopted and then adapted to their own advantage by adding the criterion of varna, skin colour, race."[75]

We may add that to many Aryan-Invasionists, the despised Brahmin caste itself must be a Harappan heritage. Or should we accept that these illiterate barbarians, who only thought of stealing cattle, eating beef and getting high on Soma juice (to which they devoted drinking carols now known as Vedic hymns), could entertain a separate caste engrossed full-time in useless rituals and puerile priestcraft? In the Harappan cities, fire altars have been found. Maybe householders themselves were officiating priests, but it may also be that there was a separate priestly class. As a corollary of the Aryan Invasion theory, it is often said that the Atharvaveda, with its magic formulas, is really borrowed from the indigenous "Tantric" priesthood, and that that is the reason why Brahmins don't rate this fourth Veda very high. At any rate, the elaborate rituals suggested in the Atharva-Veda and the Brahmanas require more professional practitioners than the "naturalistic" Rg-Vedic hymns. Like that, arguments can be accumulated for a Harappan origin of the Brahmin caste.

A theory launched around the time of the discovery of the Harappan cities, has it that the Brahmins were the indigenous class of bards and priests. Just like the Brahmins of the British period soon became proficient in English and did much of their writing in the language of the new masters, so the Harappan Brahmins soon adopted the Aryans' Sanskrit language, and expounded their own traditions in this language, or mixed these into the Aryan traditions. Wherever the tradition mentions a clash between Brahmins and Kshatriyas, bards/priests and rulers, this should at least partly be understood as a clash between natives and Aryans: the Aryan Kshatriya Rama versus the Dravidian Brahmin Ravana (or similarly, the Brahminical Kshatriya-killer Parashuram). This is a somewhat startling role reversal when compared with the common assumption that the Brahmins clung to the pure Aryan tradition while the Kshatriyas were Aryans who absorbed more native elements (e.g. the belief in reincarnation).

But the Brahmin caste is not the only one to be traced to Harappan or Dravidian culture. In ch.3.8, we shall see how the divi-

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[75] *Tantra*, p.47.

sion in endogamous groups has always been common among India's indigenous tribal population. An unexpected source of the institution of untouchability has also been suggested: "Before the coming of the Aryan ideas... the Tamils believed that any taking of life was dangerous, as it released the spirits of the things that were killed. Likewise, all who dealt with the dead or with dead substances from the body were considered to be charged with the power of death and were thought to be dangerous. Thus, long before the coming of the Aryans with their notion of *varna*, the Tamils had groups that were considered low and dangerous and with whom contact was closely regulated."[76]

While we need to elaborate this point further in the next chapters, we can already gain the impression that there is no hard evidence at all for the theory that the caste system is the result of the Aryan invaders' subduing the Dravidian Indus civilization. There is no evidence that the caste system was set up to preserve the Aryan invaders' own power position and racial purity.

1.21. Conclusion

Increasingly, Hinduism is identified by the international public with the caste system and nothing but the caste system (i.e., apart from widow-burning and lepers left to die on the pavement). The caste system, in turn, is painted in the ugliest colours: as a racist Apartheid system designed to oppress the native population. Mr. Van Lysebeth, the intemperate proponent of this grim view, is not a lonely crank writer. He merely conveys what serious secularist academics in Indian universities have thought up to blacken Hinduism to its core. He has not used any esoteric or explicitly subversive sources, and the picture he paints of Hindu society as having a profoundly racist basis, is but an explicitation of ideas which are conveyed through many channels to the entire outside world.

These notions are eagerly welcomed and amplified by outside forces, such as Christian missionary centres, followed by their Islamic counterparts. Till recently, American foreign policy agencies made no secret of their designs on India's unity. When she was US ambassador to the UN, Mrs. Jean Kirkpatrick once said that "the break-up of India is one of the goals of American foreign policy". Patrick Moynihan, who had held the same job, said more recently:

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[76] George L. Hart, III: "The Theory of Reincarnation among the Tamils", in W. Doniger: *op.cit.*, p.117.

"After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the artificial state India is also bound to break up." Perhaps the concern about Islamic militancy is making the Western strategists more friendly towards the Indian state, but then the intensity of the Islamic drive to balkanize India becomes proportionately more intense.

Public opinion in the world is being persuaded that the "forced" co-existence of "Aryan invaders", Dravidians, Mongoloid and pre-Dravidian tribals within the "artificial" Republic of India has no legitimacy. What Mr. Van Lysebeth was made to believe, influential people in the UN and other international bodies may also come to believe, with grave consequences.

But there is a silver lining. If even a declared India-lover like Mr. Van Lysebeth, someone with no personal stake in ethnic conflict in India, can embrace these divisive ideas with such passion, it means that they have reached there farthest expansion, and that at the centre from where this expansion began, they may well have exhausted their force. By the time an idea becomes popular, it is often already outdated. Indeed, the *status quaestionis* of the Aryan Invasion theory and the concomitant understanding of Indian social history may well be that it is near-universally accepted but outdated.

TWO

ARYAN ORIGINS

2.1. Aryan-Harappan antagonism

Recently, evidence has been accumulating suggesting that the archaeologically attested Indus culture and the literarily attested Vedic culture are but instances of one and the same civilization. This is applauded by Indian nationalists as a boost for India's sense of unity. Indeed, as we shall see more closely in ch.3 and ch.4, all kinds of anti-national forces are making propagandistic use of the theory that the "Aryan" culture is in fact a foreign imposition on India's original population.

For the flavour, we will already give one example of the political exploitation of Aryan-invasionism. A somewhat funny new line in Akali history falsification is that the Sikhs are the descendants of the Indus Valley Civilization. You see, the *Hari Mandir* (now mostly called *Darbar Sahib* because *Hari Mandir* still sounds too Hindu) celebrates the same god as the *Hari-yupa* which gave its name to *Hariyupiya*, i.e. Harappa. The Harappans were the enemies of the Aryan invaders, and the Sikhs continue the Harappans' liberation struggle against the Aryans, now called Hindus. It is like the Pakistanis claiming the Indus civilization ("5,000 years of Pakistan") as the hereditary enemy of the Aryans, i.e. Hindu India. At least these stories will not survive the emerging recognition of the identity of Vedic culture with the Indus civilization.

But as there is no agreement on these new theories of an Aryan Harappa yet, let us first have a fresh look at the implications of the dominant view that these two cultures are different, and have clashed in the Aryan Invasion. Suppose the two cultures were not one and the same: would it really be that damaging for India's sense of unity?

Harappa culture has continued in many respects: dress, emphasis on purity and consequent bathing culture, cult of trees, sacredness of bovines, multi-headed gods and other iconographic conventions, certain art motifs, yoga. So, if at all it was overtaken by foreign invaders, these have assimilated themselves culturally, unlike the indubitable invaders of later centuries, the Muslims. Wishing that history were entirely free from invasions will not get us very far, but it is a reasonable second-best scenario if invaders

adapt themselves and allow the indigenous civilization its continuity. Thus, the Greeks, Shakas, Kushanas and Hunas who invaded India have settled and assimilated beyond recognition, so that there are now no demands for any *Azad Shakastan*, *Huna Personal Law Board*, etc.

Even in the Aryan invasions theory, the Aryans are supposed to be in India for more than 3,000 years. They have no loyalty to any outside homeland, not even any memory of one. If that is not long enough for becoming legitimate inhabitants, then the Anglo-Saxons and Normans will have to be sent back out of England, even the Celtic populations will be of doubtful nativeness, and the pre-Celtic Picts will have to be brought back to life (to be sure, they were never exterminated, but have culturally dissolved themselves in the later populations) as a matter of restoring England to its rightful owners. The Turks will have to go back to Central Asia, the Arabs must leave North Africa, etc.[1] It is obvious that by these standards, even "Aryan invaders" are as legitimate natives now as almost anyone in any country.

Even granting the Aryan Invasions hypothesis, it is possible to view Indian culture not as the result of struggle, oppression and the annihilation of the Indus civilization, but of a synthesis which kept the essence of the Indus civilization intact. Thus, the great historian R.C. Majumdar, who took the Aryan Invasion theory for granted, writes: "In some respects, particularly in material civilization, the Dravidian speaking peoples *[meaning the Harappans]* excelled the Aryans, and in any case they must be regarded as partners of the Aryans in building up the great structure known as Hinduism."[2]

Incidentally, after describing how many cultural elements of the Indus civilization have survived till today, Majumdar displays the typical skill of the invasionists in ignoring facts disturbing to the theory: "How such a great culture and civilization could *vanish without leaving any trace* or even memory behind it, is a problem that cannot be solved at the present state of our knowledge."[3] Such a huge anomaly should call the theory itself into question. At any

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[1] To justify attacks on Coptic Christians in Egypt, Muslims ludicrously allege that "the Copts want to throw us back out of this country", thus displaying their lingering uncomfortable awareness of being an invader community even after 14 centuries.

[2] R.C. Majumdar: *Ancient India* (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1991 (1952)), p.19.

[3] *ibid.*, emphasis added.

rate, Prof. Majumdar rejects any ethnically divisive implications attributed to the Aryan Invasion theory: "On the whole it is now being gradually realized that the present civilization of India... is a composite product resulting from the fusion of several cultures in which the contribution of the Sindhu Valley Civilization must be regarded as an important factor."[4]

Scholars who accept the Aryan Invasion theory do not have to interpret Indian history as essentially a struggle between Aryans and pre-Aryans, the way many anti-Hindu agitators now do. For instance, Alain Daniélou has accepted the Aryan Invasion, but rejected the view that the Ramayana is really the story of the Aryan conquest of South India. He sees no reason to doubt the traditional (mostly Puranic) chronology of Indian history, which puts the historical core of the Ramayana story at a much earlier date than the commonly accepted date of the supposed Invasion. But, if Rama and Ravana lived earlier than the Aryan Invasion, clearly Rama cannot be an Aryan invader into South India. Instead of twisting chronology and trying other foul play in order to preserve the politically useful theory of Rama the ugly Aryan invading the hero Ravana's Dravidisthan, Daniélou opines that the Ramayana may refer to a totally pre-Aryan war, the story of which was transmitted orally (one should not underestimate the capacity of oral cultures to preserve stories for many centuries) and later, after India's "aryanization", translated into Sanskrit language.

Daniélou is big enough to combine a non-romantic view of ancient Indian history, in which he accepts the element of struggle between contending tribes and classes, with a profound respect and admiration for the Hindu culture, which he conceives as a mainstream thoroughly synthesizing the contributions of those different tributaries (in contrast to the imaginary "composite culture" superficially combining Hindu and Islamic elements).

The back cover of Daniélou's *Histoire de l'Inde* reveals something that may surprise the scholarly readers of his other works: he participated in the foundation of the *Bharatiya Jana Sangh*, the Hindu revivalist party which to him represented the true Indian values. In his perspective, it is simply puerile to hold it against Hinduism that its early history had been less than idyllic: even if its Aryan father had raped its Dravidian mother, that would still not

[4] *ibid.*, p.27.

detract from its intrinsic greatness, which is evident regardless of our conjectures about its ancient history.

There is still a big difference between a history involving Aryan immigration, and the reduction of Indian history to an ethnic conflict between Aryans and non-Aryans. Nevertheless, the scenario that would pull the carpet from under the ethnic separatists' feet, is one that puts the Vedic Aryans inside India and in a continuum with the Indus civilization.

The other side of diminishing the importance of any Vedic-Harappan struggle is that conversely, the identity of Vedic and Harappan culture, even if proven, cannot be a panacea for India's problems of national unity. While the occurrence of Aryan Invasion does not reduce India's history to a struggle between Aryans and "natives", their non-occurrence does not exclude ethnic conflicts between the "Aryan" bearers of Sanskritic culture and other also-native peoples.

For instance, it is quite thinkable that the "Aryans" were native to North India, the Dravidians native to South India, and that the Ramayana does represent a war between Aryans and Dravidians. It is quite thinkable that the Aryans were native to the Indus basin and the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, and that they chased Austro-Asiatic peoples from the lower Ganga plains to the hill areas where the Santal and Munda tribes now live. The nativeness of the Aryans to India (i.e. to a part of India) does not exclude Aryan conquest of non-Aryan territory. Nor does it exclude other types of strife (and of more peaceful forms of interaction) between ethnic entities, all native to India, yet with a truly different cultural and linguistic identity.

The postulate of Aryan Invasion does not exclude that India has managed to *develop* an organic cultural unity over the centuries, and conversely, the postulate that the Aryans are native to India, does not automatically imply India's God-given organic unity. It is quite possible that a big area like India had different cultures, geographically fairly isolated from each other, and that the nationwide cultural unity which we find in historical times, was only welded gradually. The question of whether some of these cultures were imported from outside does not change much in this picture of a plurality of population centres which achieved cultural unity only when a cultural wave swept the entire area, bringing elements familiar to one population as a new import to other populations.

Unlike many Indian nationalists, I do not believe that India as a coherent cultural unit is a predetermined divine scheme. It is true, as they argue, that India is a fairly clear-cut geographical unit, defined by the mountains and the ocean. Yet at an earlier stage, when transport and communication was less developed, an area like the one south of the Vindhya mountains may have been the biggest possible area for one homogeneous culture. On the other hand, in the modern age, mountain ranges and oceans no longer form meaningful boundaries or limits to cultural expansion and absorption. That the natural contours of India need not function as cultural or demographic boundaries, may have been true in the old days as well: it is quite possible that the Indus area had much closer relations with West and Central Asia than with South India, which in turn was in closer contact with the island world of South-East Asia; and that Gujarat had closer relations with Mesopotamia than with Bengal.

So, even if Aryans, Dravidians, Austro-Asiatics and Mongoloids are all native to roughly the areas of India which they now inhabit, this does not automatically constitute the all-India cultural unity as we now know it. If there was no opposition between native and invading cultures, the country was still big enough for oppositions between several different native cultures. With or without Aryan Invasion, India's cultural unity is probably not a gift of prehistory, but the product of a historical process that took place some time in the last 4000 years. By standard chronology, the turn of the last millennium BC must have been a crucial time for the cultural integration of what became India, soon to be formalized by the temporary political near-unity which the Nandas and Mauryas achieved (the Puranas mention earlier *Chakravarti* kings too, i.e. rulers of the whole of Bharatvarsh, but they are out of the reach of modern history).

The question of whether the Vedic people (and earlier the Harappan people) were invaders, becomes less charged with political consequences if we accept that either way, the conscious cultural unity of India is the result of a historical process of integration. On the other hand, if it is found that Vedic and Harappan culture were essentially the same, this may also be less charged with positive consequences. The determined enemy of India's unity will argue that *à la rigueur*, it remains possible that the Aryans, though not the destroyers of Harappan culture and though

not entering India in 1500 BC, may have been invaders in 2500 or 3500 BC. The same thing counts for the Dravidians in the widespread extended version of the Aryan Invasion theory: the Dravidians were invaders from West Asia, where Elam remained as the Elamo-Dravidian homeland until the last centuries BC. Though they are credited with the Harappan civilization, and though they must have been in that area since at least 3000 BC, they too are invaders, thieves of the land of the aboriginals.

You may consider it ridiculous to label a population as "invaders" because their (linguistic, not biological) ancestors entered a country 5000 years ago. But as we shall see in ch.3.13, the World Council of Churches is in all seriousness pushing the notion that the non-tribal population of India be considered on the same footing as the European-descended population of the Americas and Australia: invaders, thieves of the land. This attempt is wholly dishonest and mischievous, among other reasons because the Churches themselves have spread across the world thanks to precisely that European land-grab.

Moreover, the majority of humanity belongs to nations who entered their present habitat less than 5000 years ago. The greater part of China was not yet Chinese, the Aztecs did not yet live in Mexico, the Celts had not reached Western Europe, the Greeks had not reached Greece, there were no Russians in Siberia, no Turks in Turkey, no Romans in Rome, no Jews in Palestine, no Malagasis in Madagascar, no Hungarians in Hungary, no Blacks or Whites in America, much of Polynesia was still uninhabited, the Maoris who are now very vocal "Aboriginals" had not yet taken over New Zealand from its earlier population, etc. Labelling inhabitants of 5 millennia as invaders is the most cranky form of irredentism ever enacted; it can have no place in serious political thought, and it is tells quite a story that such things are heard in India.

Trying to disprove that one's ancestors migrated into their present habitat 5000 years ago, should be a strictly academic exercise with absolutely no political consequences for the present, if only because it is applicable to the majority of mankind, including many "natives" who have (by committing mostly unrecorded aggressions) displaced other natives. Unfortunately, India, with its sense of organic unity in disarray, is attracting vultures who have the effrontery to label the bulk of the Hindu population as invaders in order to justify their own imperialist or separatist schemes.

By consequence, Indian nationalists are making frantic efforts to prove that the Aryans did not come from outside, not in 1500 BC, not in 3500 BC, not at any time after the human race came into existence. Others are satisfied with proving a pre-Harappan entry. Some scholars are satisfied with proving that Harappan and Vedic culture are essentially one, and dismiss the search for earlier migrations as irrelevant, or, like Bhagwan Singh, pay no attention to the events in this remote period.

K.D. Sethna, who identifies the Harappan culture with the Brahmana and Sutra period of Vedic literature, does not want to claim India as the Indo-European Urheimat. Not that he readily accepts the common view that the Indo-European ethnogenesis must have taken place in Central Asia, where horses (since long identified as the necessary vehicle for Indo-European expansion) were available for initial domestication: "Horse domestication could easily have been a phase of a phase of Indo-European history, prior to which there might have been Aryans without the domesticated horse. Where such Aryans lived is a mystery."[5] He thinks that in 3500 BC, the period following the first attested horse domestication, the Indo-Europeans already occupied a very large area, from Panjab to Ukraine. But: "However, even in the epoch... when Aryanism occupied a wider space, we cannot regard India as its pristine *foyer*."

By contrast, the Bombay-based scholar Shrikant G. Talageri, the American Vedic scholar David Frawley, the BHU linguist Prof. Satya Swarup Mishra as well as other Indian authors, do affirm that India was the source land from which Aryan emigration or colonization spread Aryan culture westward. Even this does not exclude that the ultimate ancestors came from Africa as adventurous children of the African Eve, entering Asia about 100,000 years ago, but it puts them in India at least as far back as the time when undivided Proto-Indo-European was spoken.[6]

2.2. One and the same

Evidence for the view that Vedic culture and Harappa culture were instances of one and the same civilization has been accumu-

[5] Sethna: *op.cit.*, p.77.

[6] Further, entry in Australia some 55,000 years ago, conquest of Europe roughly 35,000 years ago, America at least 15,000 years ago. Estimates of the spread of Homo Sapiens from Africa as given by L.L. Cavalli-Sforza: interview in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 23/1/1992.

lating, while on the other hand the traditional arguments for the Aryan Invasion theory are being discarded after closer scrutiny. In this book, I will only give a brief survey of the *status quaestionis*, except in a few places where I have some original comment to offer or where I can draw attention to pertinent facts not hitherto noticed in this context. Some of the new insights:

1. *Horses.* Horses are prominent in the traditions of every known branch of the ancient Indo-Europeans. Horse domestication must have been the trigger for the unparalleled Indo-European expansion, of which a revolution in the life of the Indo-European tribes (paralleled by the revolution which the horse caused among Native Americans) was the first stage. In Mesopotamia, horse trade made its appearance in about 2000 BC as an Indo-European monopoly business.

In several Harappan sites, remains of horses, that "Aryan animal par excellence", have been found. This renders outdated the established view that the absence of horses disproves the Aryan presence. On the other hand, the presence of horses is not as overwhelming in quantity as in the neolithic cultures of Eastern Europe, where bridle-scarred horse teeth have been dated to 4000 BC.[7] The relative paucity of horse remains is matched by the fact that the millions-strong population of the Harappan civilization has left us only several hundreds of skeletons, even when men often had the benefit of burial which horses did not have. Still, it is most probable that the original area of horse domestication was the steppes between Ukraine and Mongolia rather than the Indus valley, and that horses were comparatively rare in India (as they would remain in later centuries, when Rajput infantry had to confront Turkish cavalry). Then again, it is quite possible that the idea of domestication was brought to the steppes from a nearby and more advanced area where donkeys and oxen were already being used as beasts of burden or even to pull carts; it is often claimed that horses were first used for the same purpose before becoming mounts.[8]

[7] By "Eastern Europe", we do not mean Central Europe (Hungary, Poland etc.), which came to be called Eastern in the Cold War equation; we mean Ukraine and Russia west of the Ural mountains. The story of horse domestication in at least 4300 BC, and its social effects, is told by David Anthony, Dimitri Y. Telegin and Dorcas Brown: "The Origin of Horseback Riding", *Scientific American* 12/1991.

[8] But this is rejected by Anthony, Telegin and Brown, who claim that riding predated the wheel, in *op.cit.* It makes little difference for our argument, among other reasons because both the horse and the wheel are part of the common Indo-European heritage, as evidenced by their presence in the common vocabulary.

The cave paintings in Bhimbetka near Bhopal, perhaps 30,000 years old, showing a horse being caught by humans (more probably for food than for domestication), do suggest that horses existed in India in spite of the paucity of skeletal remains. The fact that both the Austric and the Dravidian language families have their own words for horse, not borrowed from the language of the Aryans who are supposed to have brought the horse into India, should also carry some weight.

2. *Materials.* The absence of iron in Harappan sites is no longer taken to be in contrast with the prominence of the metal *ayas* in the Vedas: like Latin *aes*, the word *ayas* probably meant copper or bronze, and extended its meaning to "metal" in general as more metals came into use. By contrast, the seeming absence from the Vedas of cotton, a Harappan export product, indicates a scenario different from both the identity of Vedic and Harappan culture and the anteriority of Harappan to Vedic culture: at least the Vedic core-text (the Samhitas) would have to be pre-Harappan. But this is a domain where shifts in word meanings and the effect of international trade and "migration" of goods and techniques make definite conclusions difficult; claims that the Aryan Invasion had been proven on this basis were certainly premature.

3. *Geographical knowledge.* In the Vedas there is no proof of geographical knowledge of the lands beyond Afghanistan. The farthest known geographical feature is the Jaxartes (Syr Darya) river, just north of Afghanistan, the northernmost outpost of the Hindu cradle. The Puranas, which are not hymns but intentional storehouses of worldly knowledge, describe places up to the Caspian sea (as also in South India and other places which are not claimed to be the *Urheimat*). Indian travellers, perhaps to Indian settlements in these Western lands, brought and preserved a lot of geographical knowledge, which same knowledge (according to the Invasionists) the Aryan invaders had lost quickly upon moving from that very area into India. The Vedas do not preserve any veneration, not even any mention, of an *Urheimat.* Compare this with the Thora (the first five books of the Bible): edited in about the 6th century BC, it gives a central place to Moses' exodus from Egypt in about 1200 BC, and of Abraham from "Ur of the Chaldees" in about 1600 BC. Postulating that the Vedic people kept silent about (and indifferent to) a homeland which they still vividly remembered, as the Invasionists imply, is not coherent with all we

know about ancient peoples, who preserved such memories for many centuries.

4. *Saraswati*. Vedic texts describe the Saraswati river basin as the centre of Vedic culture. Due to post-Vedic geological disturbances (MASCA-corrected C-14 estimate at 2100 BC), which have directed the Saraswati's most important tributaries towards the Indus and Ganga basins, this Saraswati river largely dried up. The assumption that the Satlej was the Saraswati's main tributary would at once explain the sacredness of the Kailash mountain, at whose foot the Satlej originates. Its change of direction in the fairly flat landscape of Panjab is not that unusual a phenomenon: within human memory, the Yellow River in China has changed course a number of times, joining the sea alternatively to the north and to the south of the Shandong peninsula.

With the help of satellite photography, the Saraswati river bed has been located. It turns out that the city remains along the Saraswati (such as Kalibangan) are of Harappan-type cities. Older settlements are along the river bed, younger ones are in the middle of it, which helps us in dating the river's drying up. The upheaval in the river systems was part of an ecological disaster which may ultimately also have caused the abandonment of the Harappan cities along the Indus. The attested shifting of Vedic culture from the Saraswati to the Ganga basin (with the Yamuna-centred Mahabharata already oblivious of the erstwhile Saraswati) is then not to be read as Aryan advancement, but as an internal Aryan migration from a desertifying disaster area to a known area where related Aryans were living since many centuries.

5. *Skeletons*. The so-called massacre at Mohenjo-Daro, on which such picturesque stories of Aryan vandalism have been built, is a myth. The find of some bodies lying about had been invoked as proof of an irregular end to the city, but now we know that the people concerned have died of malaria. Prof. B.B. Lal has shown that they do not even all belong to the same period (the "destruction" layer).[9]

More fundamentally, any bodies found cannot be identified as "Aryan" or "Dravidian". As experts in physical anthropology confirm, Aryan and Dravidian are merely cultural and at best linguistic terms, and anthropology cannot identify skulls as "Aryan" or "Drav-

[9] Findings cited in Sethna: *Problem of Aryan Origins*, p.101-102.

idian". To the extent that the skulls found are a valid indication, they show the same ethnic composition which exists today. No trace of a change in ethnic composition after the decline of the Harappan cities has been found. By contrast, the appearance of the horse-domesticating Kurgan culture in East Europe is coupled with a change in predominant physical type.

6. *Chronology.* The theory that brings the Aryans into India as late as 1500 BC suffers from a number of chronological anomalies:

a. One is the incompatibility of the date of Zarathustra, now assigned to at least 1300 BC, with the postulate that the voluminous Vedas were composed in India after 1500. Zarathustra writes in a language that is definitely younger than Vedic. In the introduction to his authoritative translation of Zarathustra's *Gathas*, Prof. S. Insler writes: "The prophet's hymns are laden with ambiguities resulting both from *the merger of many grammatical endings* and from the intentionally compact and often elliptical style..."[10] Compared with Vedic, Zarathustra's language was already eroded morphologically and phonologically. Admittedly, such glottochronological argument is in general not strong (modern Lithuanian has preserved Indo-Europeanisms which Greek had lost 3000 years ago), but here we have two very closely related languages, both in the same solemn and conservative style of religious hymns. Moreover, Zarathustra also expresses a stage of religious development that is quite post-Vedic, in some respects a reaction against Vedic notions and practices.

b. Another anomaly is the presence of the Mitanni kings in Mesopotamia, with their Vedic cultural heritage and language, as early as the 15th century BC, with absolutely no indication that they were "the Aryans on the way to India". In fact, the Vedic memories appearing in the Mitanni texts were already remote, with only four Vedic gods mentioned amid a long list of non-Vedic gods: clearly, the Mitanni dynasty was post-Vedic and not pre-Vedic. In the centuries before the Mitanni texts, there was a Kassite dynasty in Mesopotamia which was linguistically assimilated but preserved a few god-names that are distinctly Vedic.

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[10] *Acta Iranica*, 3rd series vol.1, p.1. Emphasis mine.

c. The native Indian chronologies all put the Vedic age much earlier than 1500 BC. One may dismiss all this literary evidence as the product of puerile priestly scribes, but only if one has positive grounds for doing so (and merely contradicting a pet hypothesis does not count as a good ground). At any rate, the fact is that all the relevant literary sources give a chronology incompatible with the Aryans' entry in about 1500 BC.

d. The Rg-Veda has some astronomical indications which point at least some of its hymns to as far back as 4000 BC. The phenomenon of the "precession of the equinoxes" takes the ecliptical constellations (also known as the sidereal *Zodiac*, i.e. those constellations through which the sun passes) slowly past the vernal equinox point (i.e. the intersection of ecliptic and equator, rising due East on the horizon), making the whole tour in about 25,791 years. If we can read the Vedic indications properly, they mention constellations on the equinox points which were there in 4000 BC, as also those which were there in 2000 BC.

Again, these indications may be unreliable insofar as their exact meaning is not unambiguous. To say that a constellation "never swerves from the East" seems to mean that it contains the spring equinox (i.e. it is on the equator, which intersects the horizon due East), but it is not sufficiently explicit for the modern reader. Moreover, the equinox moves very slowly (1° in 70 years), so that any inexactness in the Vedic indications and any ambiguity in the constellations' boundaries makes a difference of centuries. But be that as it may, to the extent that there *are* astronomical indications in the Vedas, these contradict the hypothesis that the Vedas were composed after an invasion in about 1500 BC.

When "references to what have been interpreted as configurations of stars have been used to suggest dates of about 4000 BC for these hymns", Romila Thapar (who believes in "the generally accepted chronology that the Rig Vedic hymns were composed over a period extending from about 1500 to 1000 BC") raises the objection that "planetary positions could have been observed in earlier times and such observations been handed down as part of an oral tradition", so that they "do not constitute proof of the chronology of the Vedic hymns".[11] This would imply that accurate astronomical

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[11] Romila Thapar: "The Perennial Aryans", *Seminar* 12/1992.

data were preserved for more than two thousand years, an unparalleled feat in oral traditions. If such a feat is not an indication of literacy and of written records, at the least it supposes a mnemotechnical device capable of preserving information orally, and the one that was available was verse. So, the hymn with the memory-aiding devices of rhythm and tone must have been composed when the information was available first-hand, i.e. close to the time of the actual observation. All this in the hypothesis that we do have astronomical information in the Veda; at any rate, either there is such information, and then it indicates a very early age for the Veda, or there is none; but in no case is there astronomical information which puts the Veda at as late a date as "generally accepted" by Ms. Thapar and others.

Realistically, all these facts put the Vedas back to 2500 BC, if not beyond. Such a date had already been proposed by Winternitz on the basis of philological arguments, before the discovery of Harappa forced a tight chronology on the Invasionists.[12] Such a date implies at least the co-existence if not the identity of Vedic "Aryans" and Harappans in North-West India.

At the time of writing a volley of interesting books presenting the case against the Aryan Invasion theory has just been published or is in the process of publication:

- Bhagwan Singh: *Harappa Sabhyata aur Vaidika Sahitya* (Hindi: "Harappan Civilization and Vedic Literature"; expanded English edition forthcoming).
- Srikant G. Talageri: *Aryan Invasion Theory and Indian Nationalism.*
- David Frawley: *Gods, Sages and Kings: Vedic Secrets of Ancient Civilization.*
- K.D. Sethna's updated edition of *The Problem of Aryan Origins.* His earlier book *Karpasa* had already explored the relation between Harappan and Vedic culture on the basis of the materials attested c.q. not yet attested by Harappan archaeology and the successive stages of Vedic literature.
- An archaeologist above all suspicion of distortive chauvinism or wishful theorizing is certainly S.R. Rao, the discoverer of

[12] Winternitz wrote in 1907: "We cannot explain the development of the whole of this great literature if we assume as late a date as round about 1200 BC or 1500 BC as its starting-point." He opts for "2000 or 2500 BC" as the beginning of Vedic literature. (*History of Indian Literature*, vol 1, p.288).

Lothal and of the sunken city of Dwarka. His book *Dawn and Devolution of the Indus Civilization* presents a Sanskrit-related interpretation of the Indus script, as well as many facts pertinent to other aspects of the matter, like material culture, contacts with other countries, local cultural continuity etc.

Some earlier books by Indian writers full of fond patriotic beliefs had contained valid arguments, unfortunately in the company of some untenable, sometimes cranky assertions. The attitude of invasionist polemists was to pick out the more unfortunate assertions and hold them up for ridicule, where the scholarly attitude would have acknowledged that certain observations, even if presented in a less than impeccable context, were pertinent. For instance, Dr. N.R. Waradpande's book *Aryan Invasion, a Myth* starts out with doubting the classification of languages in groups like Indo-European and Dravidian, a position unacceptable to most scholars including myself. From that point onwards, nobody takes his book seriously, and yet it goes on to give a fairly good analysis of many pertinent points of Vedic interpretation.

The above-mentioned books all have certain minor points with which I cannot agree, but their general line seems to be in the right direction. The case against the Aryan Invasion theory had never been given up in India, but its argumentation was not such that it could convince skeptical outsiders. Now, a number of scholars are presenting the case in a way that will, on the whole, not fail to impress those whose mind has not been entirely closed by ideological compulsions. In this chapter, we will survey some of the possibly consequential facts marshalled to argue the case against the Aryan Invasion theory. At some points it may become a bit technical, but that cannot be helped even at this level of popularization of a sometimes highly esoterical debate. It would be no use arguing over the political implications of the Aryan Invasion theory without assessing, at least to the extent reasonably possible, whether or not the theory is true in the first place.

2.3. The Indus script

The Indus script is no longer the closed book which it has been for some decades. S.R. Rao has made a fairly convincing at-

tempt at decipherment, convincing because it passes several tests which other proposed decipherments have not only not passed, but which they had implied to be impossible.

The Dravidian hypothesis of Asko Parpola, Iravathan Mahadevan and others assumes that the Indus script is totally isolated, so that the final control which the relation with other, known scripts might afford, is excluded unless and until a Rosetta stone is found, a bi-lingual text juxtaposing a text in Indus script and its translation in another, known language. They assume no relation with the later Brahmi script, a script used by the "Aryans" who, within the Dravidian hypothesis, had come later and had destroyed (or at least not continued) the Indus civilization. Nor is their interpretation such that it lends itself to the suspicion of a relation with West Asian scripts.

What could help the Dravidian reading, is a relation with the Elamite script, which was used in the same period to write a language which is now generally assumed to have been Dravidian-related.[13] It is well-attested that there were intense trade relations between the Indus area and its immediate neighbour to the west, Elam (now southern Iran), so an influence in matters of script would have been quite possible, especially if the languages were still to an extent mutually understandable. Actually, there does seem to be a similarity between the early Harappan script, which was still pictographic, and the as yet undeciphered earliest script of Elam, which is assumed to be early Elamite: "The first [script] was in use from the fourth millennium BC (shortly after the beginning of writing in Sumer) to around 2200 BC. It has not been deciphered and is assumed to be Elamite due to its distribution and undisturbed overlap with the later [cuneiform] Elamite script. In form this older script is very similar to the Indus Valley script."[14] However, the very nature of pictographic script makes it possible that it was borrowed without changes from one language to another (as Chinese characters were adopted to represent words in Japanese and Korean), so this doesn't inform us about which languages were involved. It is even conceivable that the Indus script originally represented Elamo-Dravidian or another language, and was subse-

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[13] See David McAlpin: "Toward Proto-Elamo-Dravidian", *Language*, 1974, 50, I; "Elamite and Dravidian, Further Evidence of Relationships", *Current Anthropology*, 1975, 16; *Proto-Elamo-Dravidian*, Philadelphia 1981.

[14] David McAlpin: "Linguistic prehistory: the Dravidian situation", in Madhav M. Deshpande and Peter Edwin-Hook: *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, p.175-189.

quently adopted by the Aryans.

Parpola and his followers cannot help it that no Harappan Rosetta stone is available, and it is quite possible that a script developed without being modelled on other scripts (thus, it seems obvious that the Meso-American scripts evolved independently from those of the Old World). Still, it would be helpful if a control were possible. S.R. Rao's hypothesis seems to provide a double check: on the one hand, the language written on the Indus seals is a language roughly known to us, and on the other, it uses signs of which many are known from another place and another time. The language is a dialect of Sanskrit, the script largely similar to the Semitic alphabets that appear around 1600 BC and to the Brahmi script attested since about 400 BC. Rao does not assume relations with Semitic and Brahmi scripts beforehand, but in developing his proposed reading of the Indus script he does end up discovering a good reason for postulating such relations, and that allows for some outside verification of his attempt at decipherment.

Rao notices first of all that as the Indus civilization matures, strictly figurative signs tend to disappear, leaving a much more uniform set of much fewer cursive signs. These were characterized by ligaturing of individual signs into compounds (some of which look deceptively like figurative signs), and by accenting (the adding of small diacritic signs to the compounds, like the vowel signs on the Devanagari syllabic compounds of consonant signs). It shares these characteristics with the later Brahmi script (out of which the modern Indian alphabets were developed) and with the Semitic alphabets in their advanced stage (when vowel marks were added in contexts where exact pronunciation was necessary, e.g. the Bible and later the Quran). These characteristics give the near-certainty that the mature Indus script was a phonological and in fact an alphabetic (rather than a picto- or logographic) script.[15] There were 24 basic phonetic signs (some of which had alternative forms), but 28 ideographs continued to be used, just like Japanese combines Chinese ideographs with alphabetic writing. The diacritical marks have an identifiable vowel value.

As many as 17 of the 24 cursive signs are in common with the Semitic (Hebrew, Arabic and first of all Phoenician) alphabets,

[15] In a sense, the Devanagari and related scripts are syllabic; yet, the syllable-signs for ***ka, ke, ki, ko*** etc. all have the ***k*** sign in common, which is the typical feature of the alphabetic scripts.

which are attested since the mid-second millennium BC. It is therefore quite logical to start with trying out the same sound values for the Indus signs as for their corresponding Semitic signs. And yes, this yields a reading that makes sense.

The script seems not to contain aspirates or cerebrals, just like Avestan, but the reason could be that their perception of phonetic distinctions was not yet mature, or that the development of the cerebral consonants in Sanskrit was a later development (retro-actively applied to Vedic hymns), perhaps under Dravidian influence. Then again, some of the words found seem to show a development in the direction of Avestan (*hapta* instead of *sapta*), and some terminology also points to an Avestan element (*atar* rather than *agni* for "fire", *asha* rather than *satya* for "truth").

At any rate, the language is closely akin to Sanskrit and is definitely not Dravidian. The Brahmi script would have evolved straight from the Harappan script and thus be a sister rather than a daughter of the Phoenician alphabet. That Brahmi was adopted from the "ancient Sindh-Panjab script of the non-Aryans" had already been suggested in 1960, within the Aryan Invasion framework, by S.K. Chatterji.[16]

There may be some problems with Rao's theory, though. First of all, if the Semitic alphabet was adapted from the Indus alphabet (a scenario which is in itself quite plausible given the existing trade contacts), then its origins do not lie elsewhere, in the derivation from another earlier script. Yet, some theories have been proposed suggesting a link with Egyptian hieroglyphics or other ancient scripts.[17] None of these attempts has proven to be wholly convincing, and experts consulted by me have said that the matter is simply not resolved yet. The fact that not the metropolitan cultures but the peripheral traders' community on the Levantine coast was the first to "invent" the alphabet, does indicate foreign origins. Perhaps the earlier Vedic scholars who linked the Panis, the non-Vedic seafaring traders mentioned in the Veda, with the Phoenicians, were not that wrong after all.

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[16] S.K. Chatterji: *Indo-Aryan and Hindi*, p.52-54, quoted by Madhav M. Deshpande in: "Genesis of Rgvedic Retroflexion. A Historical and Sociolinguistic Investigation", in M.M. Deshpande and Peter Edwin Hook: *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, p.302.

[17] The derivation of the Sinaitic alphabet from hieroglyphics has been attempted by (among others) Joseph Bouuaert: *Petite Histoire des Alphabets* (Brussels 1949), ch.3.

Secondly, if the script is alphabetic, how come that it looks so very pictographic? The famous figures of a man carrying a bow, or of a man with arms outstretched and a kind of horns on his head, are analyzed by Rao as combinations of alphabetic signs. Clearly, these signs were not written in a fixed order on a line, but were combined in a somewhat artful way, so as to look like pictures. If this seems strange, one may however recall that in Urdu (and other languages using the Arabic script) calligraphy, such type of fanciful writing variations which show flowers, minarets etc. is also practised. After all, the Indus seals were not just prosaic (though often secular) messages, but seals: short but official messages and names, a typical occasion for the use of calligraphy with its peculiar conventions.

Thirdly, S.R. Rao weakens his case by displaying his own unfamiliarity with Indo-European linguistics. Thus, he opines that the Harappan language had only three cases, while Indo-European and classical Sanskrit had eight. If it is true that only three cases have been attested on the Indus seals, this could be explained by the fact that the seals do not contain literary texts, hardly even normal sentences, but merely "this object belongs to X", or "is dedicated to god Y" or "was sent on date Z". In these short notes, the full case system would not be needed, much less the full verbal conjugation system. On closer analysis, this sloppy statement on the Harappan case system makes no difference for Rao's decipherment.

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the ongoing attempts to interpret the Indus script as transcribing a Dravidian language. However, two remarks are in order.

One, eventhough many pop books on the Indus culture give it as an established fact that the Indus language was Dravidian, the case for a Dravidian reading is not that strong. After half a century of being the official (read well-funded) hypothesis, many of its formulations are still rather clumsy and unconvincing. Thus, Walter Fairservis tries to read the script by assuming it represents Dravidian and uses the rebus principle, i.e. it uses depictions of easy-to-depict objects in order to signify homophonous terms which are harder to represent (as if you would represent the English particle *too* with two strokes depicting the homophonous word *two*). Thus, a particular sign looking like a grain stalk would mean "moon", because "*nel* means rice in five Dravidian languages and *nila* or *nela* means moon in three of the same five and in five others as

well".[18] However, no pictographic script would ever use the rebus principle to represent an easy-to-depict item like the moon (cfr. Chinese, where a moon-like picture represents both "moon" and "month"). Further, the whole approach of reading homophonous words into the script presupposes that we know the pronunciation of "Harappan Proto-Dravidian", but in fact the oldest Dravidian texts we have are a full two thousand years younger and were written in far-away Tamil Nadu. Without going into further details, my impression with each one of the Dravidian readings is that in spite of the computer techniques used, a great deal of random guessing has gone into them.

Secondly, the procedure so far used to crack the Indus code wrongly assumes that the structure of the language (agglutinative in the case of Dravidian, as opposed to flexive in the case of Indo-European) can be deduced from the series of signs available on the Indus seals. But it suffices to compare the different Dravidian interpretations proposed so far by the respective Finnish, Russian, American and Indian scholars, to find that starting from the same premisses, one reading takes a given sign to be a declension suffix while another takes it to be a preposition and yet another interprets it as a noun root. It is simply not true that with the present linguistic and cryptographic knowledge, the Dravidian-agglutinative structure of the Indus language can be (let alone has been) demonstrated.

Prof. Rao reports with some pride that his reading of the Indus script is being accepted by scholars and institutes in the West, including a few ex-adherents of the Dravidian theory. Some of his supporters have tried their hand at deciphering as yet undeciphered seals, and equally found readings that made good sense. The burden of proof is shifting towards the Dravidian hypothesis, which has not yet yielded any convincing results. And its advocates are not reacting very vigorously: in his latest book on the decipherment, published in 1992, several years after S.R. Rao's proposed decipherment was made known, Walter Fairservis refers a lot to the work of his fellow Dravidianists but ignores Rao's proposals completely.

This haughty unconcern of some scholars does not rule out the possibility that the puzzle on which they are still working, has al-

[18] Walter Fairservis jr.: "The script of the Indus Valley Civilization", in *Scientific American* (photocopy sent to me without dateline).

ready been solved by scientific method in the hands of their colleague S.R. Rao.

2.4. *Urheimat* on the Saraswati

If we extract the rudiments of an alternative theory about the Indo-European Urheimat from the more daring passages of the anti-Invasionist literature available, it would add up to the scenario which we will give in this chapter. Its start is usually a critique of the historical process by which the Aryan Invasion theory has become so firmly established.

It should be borne in mind, we are told, that the Indian *Urheimat* was the original hypothesis when the kinship of the Indo-European languages was recognized. Around 1800, there was a veritable *Indomania* among European scholars: Sanskrit was replacing Hebrew as the presumed mother of all languages, and India was the new Earthly Paradise from which humanity had sprung. If the hypothetical *Urheimat* was shifted westward during the 19th century, this was partly for non-scholarly reasons. Different parts of Northern and Eastern Europe were claimed as the Urheimat essentially for the following three reasons:

1. European chauvinism refused to give the honour to India, which was then fast evolving from a mysterious realm in the Orient with its hoary traditions and wisdom, to just one more of the colonized territories whose culture would soon be superseded by the superior European culture. This shift in the power and prestige equation conditioned the mind of the scholars against ascribing much of importance to India. Moreover, some scholars shared in the mind-set of the colonizer who legitimized his presence in India by depicting the natives as merely an earlier wave of colonizers.
2. A handful of words in Sanskrit and especially Greek sources were taken to mean that the ancient Indo-Europeans were fair-haired and had a tall Nordic-looking build. Greek and Armenian epics take care to describe their heroes as blond-haired types. The incidence of similar physical traits including blue eyes among South Asian peoples like the Afghans and Kurds indicated that they at least partly descended from a race whose heartland is in Northern Europe. This view was later reinforced by the discovery that the weak pigmentation which makes for blue eyes and fair hair, is genetically

a *recessive* trait: in mixed populations, its incidence decreases. Therefore, the area where the pure Nordic type predominates was likely to be its Urheimat, and the areas where its traits appeared mixed with other traits, must have had a larger Nordic-looking population in the past (enough to effect linguistic assimilation of the natives), which was however disappearing into the sea of "aboriginal" non-Nordic population. Of course, this line of thought presupposes an identification of the expansion of the Proto-Indo-European language community with the expansion of a racial type, a presupposition now generally rejected.

3. Certain apriori assumptions of plausibility rejected the idea that the widespread Indo-European presence could have spread out from one of its far corners. It was deemed more sensible to put the Urheimat somewhere in the middle: say Hungary, Lithuania or South Russia. Against that, one could have brought up that putting the Urheimat in the middle really means a double hypothesis with a double burden of proof: it postulates a migration west, and another migration east. To assume that the Aryans simply spread victoriously in all directions, presupposes a distinct Aryan superiority at least in a demographic and/or military sense. On the other hand, it may betray a disbelief in the Aryans' capability to cover the entire distance from western Europe to India, in one direction or the other, in a single movement.

More sophisticated arguments were later constructed to explicitate and underpin the European Urheimat theory, which we shall consider in the next sub-chapters. The result is that contemporary scholars are convinced that there is sufficient independent and objective evidence for a European Urheimat. Disputes are only about which part of Europe it is.

Indian scholars often get excited about supposed imperialist motives distorting the views of Western scholars. Thus, they point to the missionary commitment of Sankritists like Max Muller and Sir Monier-Williams and of Dravidologists like Bishop Caldwell and Reverend Pope. While it is true that the Aryan Invasion theory has been and still is being used for political purposes, it is hardly credible that a whole constellation of scholars set aside academic standards just to please the colonial and missionary strategists. On the whole, these scholars genuinely believed in their own hypotheses,

and if they sometimes displayed great ingenuity in explaining away facts inconvenient to their pet theory, this should be seen as merely the universal phenomenon that people are attached to their beliefs, regardless of the latter's possible (and to many Westerners irrelevant or unknown) political implications in the Indian context. As we saw in ch.2.1, even a first-rate and patriotic historian like R.C. Majumdar had the same capacity to keep on ignoring facts disturbing the theory to which his mind had become accustomed, viz. the Aryan Invasion theory.

Some Indian scholars have recently made the opposite claim about Western scholars, viz. that they have rejected the Aryan Invasion theory (and consequently the European Urheimat). They make this claim as an argument of authority against their Indian opponents, who are the ones usually claiming to have the Enlightened West in their pocket. As it is, the claim of Western support against the Aryan Invasion theory is unfounded. Perhaps the recent acceptance in some quarters of S.R. Rao's decipherment will make scholars take a fresh look, but so far, the Western scholars are almost totally unaware that there could possibly be doubt about the Aryan Invasion.

It is true that after flourishing for more than a century, the hypothesis of the East European Urheimat has still not been firmly proven, but lately types of evidence have been collected which seem to carry more conviction than the scarce and flimsy proofs on which the 19th-century Aryan theories were based. It is true that the established view which excluded an Asian Urheimat, continues to mentally condition the researchers, but the general impression among Western scholars is now that the Urheimat has been fixed with more reliable methods than in the past, notably in an area about halfway between the Eastern and Western extremes of the Indo-European speech area. Well, not really fixed, because there is still vivid disagreement among experts: a few researchers have spoken for Transcaucasia (T.V. Gamkrelidze and V.V. Ivanov), the Balkan (I.M. Diakonov) or Anatolia (C. Renfrew), but the majority opinion is with Marija Gimbutas, who puts the Urheimat in the archaeologically well-attested Kurgan culture of the lower Donau and Dniepr. While some Indian anti-invasionists are still busy attacking Max Muller, it is these recent theories that have to be scrutinized and possibly refuted.

It is true that a number of ideological considerations and plain

prejudices have influenced Indo-European theorizing in the past two centuries, and that some of this conditioning is still lingering. However, one cannot reduce the present state of belief to merely these external compulsions and influences. Further, as a healthy convention of debate, these supposed distortive factors only become an issue once the findings profferred as evidence have been shown to be wrongly interpreted: once the theory is proven wrong, it becomes a point to find out why this wrong theory had become so popular.

As the controversial philosopher of science Ludwig Feyerabend has shown, a theory is seldom abandoned because of emerging flaws that start to disappoint its initial believers; instead, it is superseded by a new theory that proves itself to be better. Theories are not beaten by facts, but by better theories. So, it is hardly any use demonstrating the flaws in the current Aryan Invasions theory: its shortcomings are obvious when you read any accepted presentation of the theory (lack of hard proof, Tokharic anomaly, Mitanni anomaly, chronological anomalies). They are known to most proponents of the theory, and yet they do not seem to create any doubts. One should not waste energy on attacking an established theory and trying to drill one's criticism into the believers' heads, one should instead formulate an alternative theory and show how it explains all the known data better.

From the books refuting the Aryan Invasions theory, we might extract the rudiments of an alternative theory. I will sketch the broad outline, while accepting that a battle-ready formulation should be much more exhaustive. At the time when Proto-Indo-European was spoken (in approximately the form reconstructed in the late 19th century by Karl Brugmann, therefore called "Brugmannian Indo-European", or in an even earlier form), it was spoken in North India, including the Indus and Saraswati basins and at least the western part of the Ganga basin. This area must have known several dialect-groups ranging between two extremes:

1. the north-western, which underwent fairly little influence from its thinly populated surroundings, and which retained the characteristics of the original the longest; most Indo-European languages ultimately stem from these dialects, which differentiated sharply after their speakers took the plunge into the wide spaces of Central Asia and Eastern Europe where they mixed with different native populations;

2. the south-eastern, which were in contact with the neighbouring Dravidian and Austric languages, but mostly developed on their own and grew away from the original faster than the north-western group; the Indic languages are its progeny; they differentiated much less from each other because the geographical continuity of their habitats in North-India ensured that they kept on influencing each other.

As the north-western group migrated piecemeal to the north and west, the south-eastern dialect features spread over most of the north-west as well. It is here, in the Saraswati basin, that Vedic Sanskrit was developed, while proto-Iranian developed in the Panjab. The south-eastern dialects would remain geographically and culturally close, and were to diverge only little in the ensuing millennia: they became the still-existing Indian Prakrits, influenced and stabilized by (though not derived from) their upgraded sister-language Sanskrit. By contrast, the north-western group would bring forth a wide variety of languages. Its speakers domesticated the horse and migrated to West Asia and Eastern Europe, where they may already have had trade colonies, which became cultural foci even for the local inhabitants. Though small in number compared with those Indo-Europeans who stayed behind in India, they increased their numbers fast by assimilating the populations they encountered on their westward migration. They never physically replaced the original populations, and yet they managed to colonize them linguistically and culturally.

The first emigrant group were the Hittites, who moved to Anatolia. Second were the Tokharic people, who remained close to the cradle, in what is now East Turkestan (Xinjiang) and the Chinese province Gansu. Next, Germanic separated northwestward, followed by Italic, Celtic, Illyrian, Greek, Baltic, Slavic and Armenian. All this while the Indo-European language continued to develop and became more complex and morphologically rich.

The startling fact is that the Indo-Europeans managed to impose their language in such a vast territory, from Portugal to Bengal, and from Sri Lanka to Scandinavia (a process completed only in the Roman period, when Pictish, Ligurian and Iberian disappeared). It did not succeed everywhere: the Mitannic, Hittite and Tokharic populations dissolved into their surrounding speech communities. Still, their success is otherwise without parallel. We can meaningfully speculate on why this linguistic colonization came

about. By Central Asian and European standards, the Indian emigrants' number may have been quite high, as India was a demographic growth centre (due to its climate and large river systems). Natural calamities like the drying of the Saraswati river bed may have compelled entire populations to leave. But most importantly, the emigrants must have enjoyed a high cultural prestige in their new environments, thus encouraging the adoption of their language by the natives.

The higher the social prestige attached to a language, the less people are needed to spread it by physically migrating. It has been argued that Indo-European spread virtually without migration. I.M. Diakonov, in his criticism of the Transcausasian (or "Middle East") Urheimat theory proposed by T.V. Gamkrelidze and V.V. Ivanov, writes: "From our point of view there was no migration as such in the 5th-3rd millennia BC. There was a gradual spread from one centre in all directions... These expanding tribes met local, poor and hungry sparser populations, often consisting of hunters and cattle-breeders. The migrants started to merge with the local population, giving them their language and cultural achievements But in some cases, the local population may have been larger in numbers than the migrants. In some historical situations the language of the minority, if it was widely used and understandable on a vast territory, could be accepted as *lingua franca*, and later as the common language, particularly if it was a language of cattle-breeders (cf. the examples of the Semites and the Turks). The area of the newly created population became itself a centre of population spread, and so on. Bloody conquests could take place in some instances; in others it was not the case, but the important thing to realize is that what migrated were languages, not peoples, although there had to be at least a handful of users of the languages, though not necessarily native speakers."[19]

This is true regardless of the Urheimat, except that in the case of an India Urheimat, the "spread in all directions" can only have begun after a second centre of dispersion was set up in the relative emptiness of Central Asia and Eastern Europe. In India itself, a process of linguistic assimilation may have "spread in all directions" from the river valleys inhabited by the original Indo-Europeans to some originally non-Indo-European upland tribes.

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[19] I.M. Diakonov: "On the Original Home of the Speakers of Indo-European", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1-2/1985, p.92-174, specifically p.152-153.

That the Europeans do not simply speak languages evolved from Proto-Indo-European, but rather languages that have incorporated phonological, lexical and grammatical elements of non-Indo-European languages, has long been acknowledged by linguists. In the case of Greek, over one third of the vocabulary has been identified as stemming from an earlier "substratum language". In Hittite, the substratum influence is even bigger, thoroughly affecting not only the vocabulary but also the grammar; by the time Hittite surfaced in history (2000 BC), it must have absorbed many external influences. By contrast, as we shall see, this substratum influence is considerably less in the Indo-Aryan languages. It is in Europe more than in India that speakers of substratum languages have adopted the Indo-European language and transformed it.

This scenario does not say that Indian colonizers came all the way to Ireland to set up the Celtic language family. The genesis of a number of already divergent Indo-European dialects as a result of the interaction between Urheimat-descended colonists and local populations may well have taken place in those very areas which are now claimed as the Aryan Urheimat, i.e. the northern coast of the Black Sea. From this secondary focus, some good old migrations and "Aryan invasions" may have taken place, though in the well-populated areas of Europe the ultimate biological fusion with more numerous indigenous populations must have been the general rule. Those very migrations (of the Greeks through the Balkan, of the Celts through Central Europe) which are fairly well-attested and now taken as proving the South Russian *Urheimat*, can be incorporated in the new theory, provided the initial spread from India is placed well before the spread from the secondary focus.

Later, after the differentiation and spread of the branches of the Indo-European family had taken place, there were a few migrations of people speaking dialects which have become the Iranian languages. We may surmise that the drying up of the Saraswati river bed (around 2100 BC) caused a large-scale migration, east- and southward but also westward. When resources became scarcer, this may have constituted a factor of war and served as the ultimate cause for the Vedic "battle of the ten kings", which is described as forcing a whole range of tribes westward out of India. The decay of the Indus settlements around 1750 may have been a related occasion for migration.

The Mitanni people, attested in northern Mesopotamia in about

1400 BC, were Vedic Indians too small in number not to get absorbed into the civilized nations of Mesopotamia. But the important thing is that they give proof of having belonged to Vedic culture through the names of Vedic gods in their invocation formulae used in contracts and treaties, and through some Sanskritic terms pertaining to horse-training. They were definitely not Iranians, nor pre-separation Indo-Iranians, but Vedic Aryans by origin. They must have migrated out of the Vedic cradle not long after 2000 BC.

The chronology of this whole scenario is not yet very detailed, but a few things can be said with confidence. Contrary to what the Aryan Invasion theory implies, the Rg-Veda definitely preceded the separation of Indians and Iranians. Thus, the *upanayana* ceremony which Vedic and Mazdeic traditions have in common, is not yet attested in the Rg-Veda, nor among the other Indo-European peoples, and seems to be a subsequent development. There should also be a relation between the separation of the Iranians and the struggle between Devas (worshipped by the Indians) and Asuras (worshipped by the Iranians, who considered the *Daevas* as devils), but as a Vedic theme this *Deva-Asura-Samgram* belongs to a later stage, for in the early layers the Asuras are not yet considered in a negative light at all.

The bulk of the Rg-Veda also precedes the classical epoch of the Indus cities (2300-1750 at the latest), which coincides with some of the later Vedic writings. The late Rg-Vedic event of the Battle of the Ten Kings can, through correlation with the dynastic chronologies given in the Puranas, be dated to this classical Harappan epoch. The final compilation of the Vedic hymns by Veda-Vyasa, traditionally related to the Mahabharata war, would have taken place in the 15th century BC; at that time, most of the Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad literature had already been completed as well.

The replacement of the Aryan Invasion theory with an Indian *Urheimat* theory is something of a Copernican revolution. It has tremendous repercussions for the early history of India, Mesopotamia, Europe, Central Asia, and to an extent even East Asia. Thus, while the Indus script was not the oldest writing system in the world, its alphabetic stage does seem to be the mother of not only Brahmi and all the Indian alphabets (and Tibetan, and some Southeast-Asian), but even of the Semitic alphabets: Hebrew, Arabic and Phoenician, from which are derived the Greek, Latin, Runic and Cyrillic alphabets.

The Rg-Veda contains a division of roughly the ecliptic into 27 constellations or *nakshatras*, a division which, according to the science historian Joseph Needham, must have a common origin with a similar division used by the Chinese. As the Chinese had altered the division's latitudes so as to centre it on the equator rather than on the ecliptic, and as the precession of the equinoxes slowly pushes those equatorial constellations away from the equator, it is possible to calculate from the present position when the Chinese division was started: in the 25th century BC.[20] In the preceding centuries, the Chinese may have adopted the Indian system, so that after some practice of its use, they could redesign it to suit their own insights, viz. to an equator-centred co-ordinate system. The Indian *nakshatra* system is mentioned in its entirety in both the Yajur and the Atharva Veda, and fragments of it already appear in the Rg Veda; Needham's hypothesis that the Indians borrowed from the Chinese is based on the belief that the Rg Veda was composed only in roughly the 14th century BC, and should be reversed if we accept the chronology given above.

The Vedic people used a century of 60 years, at least according to later astronomers. Aryabhatta claims that he was 23 when the 60th such century ended. Calculating back from Aryabhatta, that would bring the start of this system to the oft-mentioned year 3102 BC. It would not be a coincidence that the Chinese too have a 60-year century, with the first one starting in 2697 BC along with the reign of the legendary Yellow Emperor.

With its extensive and fertile river systems of the Indus, Saraswati and Ganga, India was the best place on earth for food production, for demographic growth, for cultural life and for scientific progress. That is not a chauvinistic myth, but a materialist dogma: economic quantity generates quality in the superstructure. Even if we refrain from predictions about the quality of culture which such an environment should generate, at least we can be very sure that, after mankind had been wandering over the earth for several lakhs of years, trying out the best places for survival, a generous country like India must have had a large population.

Saying that India had a large population may not sound very revolutionary, yet in the context of the Aryan Invasion theory it is.

[20] Joseph Needham: ***Science and Civilization in China***, ch.20: ***Astronomy***, p.253-254.

Today, the theory of the Aryan Invasion, complemented by the secondary theory of an earlier Dravidian invasion, assumes that India was nearly empty. On the other hand, the steppes of Eastern Europe and Central Asia were a beehive of people. Today, the huge ex-Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan has hardly more people than the city of Bombay, but in those days, the steppes had so many people, most of them "Aryans", that they could flood both India and Europe with them. So, against that common though unspoken presupposition, it has become quite a statement to say that lands with a hospitable climate like India had a bigger population than the outlying steppes.

It is practically certain that large groups of Indians went to other countries as traders and colonists. The view of some crank Hindu writers that the ancient Hindus colonized the world, may have a grain of truth in it. India must have had quite a cultural radiation. In fact, it may have had a position of cultural dominance like that of the West in the last few centuries.

2.5. Linguistic clues

The one material which can reliably be attributed to the original Indo-Europeans is, by definition, the Proto-Indo-European language, and its remains in the present-day languages belonging to the Indo-European family. The differentiation of languages from a common proto-language has been reconstructed in a fairly convincing way.

One of the first well-known phenomena in the differentiation of the branches of Indo-European, is the division in *Kentum* and *Satem* languages. The latter are affected by the palatalization of certain guttural consonants, i.e. a shift from k/g to ch/j or sh/zh or s/z in certain phonetic contexts. The names "Satem languages" and "Kentum languages" are derived from the Indo-European word for "hundred", **Kmtom*, which has retained the initial [k] in the Latin form *kentum*, but changes it in the Sanskrit form *shata* and the Avestan form *satem*. The Satem group comprises Baltic, Slavic, Armenian and Indo-Iranian, the Kentum group comprises Celtic, Italic, Germanic (where [k] became fricative [kh] and ultimately [h], whence *hund-red*), Greek, Illyrian, Anatolian and Tokharic.

In historical and comparative linguistics, this palatalization effect is found to be very common. Thus, in English, *witch* has evolved from the older form *wicca*: the *k* sound has become *ch*. A

comparison with the more conservative Dutch equivalents shows this to be a rather common phenomenon: *welk/which, jeuk/itch, dekker/thatcher, kaas/cheese.* This process is well-attested in other language families too, e.g. in the Bantu languages we have Ki-swahili, Ki-kongo, but Chi-luba. In the Semitic languages we have Hebrew *Gabriel*, but Arabic *Jibri'l.* In Chinese, *Peking* has become *Beijing*, *kiang* has become *jiang* (meaning "river", as in *Yangzijiang*, or meaning "territory", as in *Xinjiang*), *kim* ("gold", adopted as a popular Korean name) has become *jin.* In Chinese dialects like Cantonese, as well as in the Chinese-derived vocabularies of neighbouring languages, the Kentum forms have been preserved: this provides an exact parallel of how satemization in Proto-Indo-European was a trend in the metropolitan area, not affecting the peripheral dialects which were to become the Kentum languages. In the Sanskrit conjugations, we see the traces of this progressive palatalization (which affected the gutturals only before e and i, just like c in English is only pronounced as [s] before e, i and y): from *gegama* through *jegama* to *jagama*, from *kekara* through *cekara* to *cakara.*

Some Indian chauvinists maintain that Satem was the original variety, and Kentum a later development. This is extremely improbable. Palatalization is usually a one-way affair, cases of gutturalization of palatals are virtually non-existent (to my knowledge, this only happens in the process of adopting foreign vocabulary by a community unfamiliar with the palatal sounds, as when the Egyptians were arabized and pronounced *Najib* as *Naguib*, *Jamaat* as *Gamaat* etc.). There is every reason to maintain that Satem is a development from the original Kentum. It so happens that this position is also more favourable to an Indian Urheimat theory.

If we do not want to exaggerate the amount of migration in the early Indo-European history, we must assume that the Urheimat was in the Satem-speaking area. The scenario would then be that groups of people emigrated, taking with them varieties of the original Kentum forms. Meanwhile, in the heartland the language kept on evolving, and Kentum became Satem (at an uneven pace in the different dialects), so that only the last groups of emigrants, who remained closest to the heartland, have taken Satem forms with them. That is why the Kentum languages have been found at the extreme ends of the Indo-European area, in Europe (Germanic, Celtic, Italic, Greek, Illyrian), Anatolia (Hittite) and in what is now

the People's Republic of China (Tokharic); and why the Satem languages are confined to India and areas relatively nearby, which could be reached from India's northernmost regions without having to confront dense settled populations (Baltic and Slavic in the steppe areas, Armenian and Iranian in the mountainous areas on this side of the population centres of West Asia). Baltic has retained a few Kentum forms (e.g. the god name *Perkunas*, = Vedic *Parjanya*), and palaeo-Balkanic, an extinct western branch of the Armenian group (Pelasgian, Thracian) had preserved Kentum forms systematically in specific phonetical contexts.[21]

The development of the Satem variety was an uneven process, and one cannot say that the Kentum c.q. Satem languages have many other linguistic characteristics in common on top of the Kentum c.q. Satem feature. There are some, e.g. Slavic shares with Indo-Iranian the tendency to transform [s] into [sh] under the influence of adjoining sounds [i], [u], [r] and [k]. But there are also features which cut across the Kentum/Satem divide, e.g. most Satem and Kentum languages retain the [s] where the Satem language Armenian and the Kentum language Greek change it into [h]: Greek *hapta* corresponding to Latin *septem*. Even within the (Satem) Indo-Iranian group, this differentiation appears: Sanskrit *sapta* but Iranian *hapta*.

Certain grammatical features make for a division in a northern group, including Kentum Germanic as well as Satem Baltic and Slavic, and a southern group called "Greek-Armenian-Aryan" or "East Indo-European", including Kentum Greek as well as Satem Sanskrit. According to Diakonov, "isoglosses always occur in bundles, very seldom coinciding with one another. Therefore, we should not be surprised that satemization as an innovative isogloss does not always coincide precisely with the other isoglosses characteristic for East Indo-European. Indeed, satemization is located more north in comparison with the other East Indo-European isoglosses: it does not include the most southern, historically speaking, of the eastern languages, namely Greek; but occurs on the other hand in the northern Balto-Slvic dialects, which are not part of the East Indo-European group. Nonetheless, both the process of satemization and the process of formation of the East Indo-Euro-

[21] Conversely, Greek has a few cases of palatalization, though not of the gutturals but of the Indo-European [dy-] and [y-] sounds, which yield *zeta*, i.e. [dz], originally no doubt [j]: *Dyaus* corresponds to *Zeus*, *yug-* to *zygon*.

pean dialect community should be considered part of the processes leading to the break-up of the common Indo-European centre..."[22]

In practice, this means that we should not plump for the obsolete view that Proto-Indo-European first split into kentum and satem dialects, and subsequently into the different branches. Instead, it is quite possible that the Satem dialects Baltic and Slavic separated from a central group including Satem Aryan, semi-Satem palaeo-Balkanic and kentum Greek, which continued to develop common characteristics before splitting up too. Further, it is possible that Kentum Germanic and Satem Balto-Slavic split off together and developed together for a while even while being distinct on kentum-satem lines.

We see it in modern languages too, that within one language, which develops as a whole (common literature, common innovations in vocabulary, writing style, etc.), certain dialects show a Satem shift or retain Kentum features which have been abandoned in the standard language. For instance, in some German dialects, the fricative /kh/ of Standard High German is pronounced [sh], as in *Ich*/[ish]); conversely, Cantonese still pronounces [k] for what has become [j] in Mandarin Chinese, e.g. [kim] for [jin]. These are initially non-meaningful variations, which only start demarcating between different languages when many other features have also differentiated. Given the ease with which the Kentum/Satem shift takes place in languages throughout the world, it is not even necessary to postulate that in Indo-European, it happened in one movement. Just like Italic (Latin) was for long an eponymous member of the Kentum family, and subsequently underwent satemization (Italian *cento*, English *cent*), so also it would be conceivable that Balto-Slavic parted company with Indo-Iranian as a Kentum language, and subsequently developed the Satem features on its own.

The exact story of the differentiation of Indo-European into its separate branches proves to be difficult to reconstruct: a finding which, on the bright side, militates against smugness in advocating now-fashionable hypotheses.

The very ancient date postulated in ch.2.4 (on the basis of astronomical indications) for the earliest layers of the Vedas might come in conflict with the fact that Sanskrit has had to take some steps of linguistic evolution away from Proto-Indo-European, un-

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[22] I.M. Diakonov: *op.cit.*, p.98-99.

less we assume a sufficiently remote date for the dispersion of the Kentum languages, viz. before the Veda composition started. The latter assumption is not at all far-fetched: if even closely cognate Iranian split off from Indo-Aryan as early as 2000 BC, the emigration of Proto-Germanic etc. may well date back to 4000 BC. Alternatively, the Vedic hymns may well be somewhat older than the language in which they have come down to us. We need not exclude a linguistic, or at least a phonetical, evolution between the time of composition and the time when the Vedic language was codified in grammar and a writing system.

Within Vedic Sanskrit, there is considerable evolution in the grammar. Moreover, it is not strictly impossible that a hymn composed in a language close to Proto-Indo-European subsequently underwent the phonological Kentum/Satem shift or the vowel shift from Indo-European a/e/o to Sanskrit a. Similarly, it is quite thinkable that the differentiation between dental and retroflex or cerebral consonants was not yet present in the original Vedic, and only developed (or crept in from Dravidian influences, that is a point of discussion) by the time Sanskrit reached its classical form.

If this seems improbable to some readers, it may be pointed out that there exists a well-attested and fairly exact parallel: the continuity of living Latin literature across centuries of linguistic change. There is considerable grammatical and phonological difference between Classical and Medieval (or Church) Latin. *Caesar* evolved from [kaisar] to [chezar] or [sezar], *agnus* (lamb) from [agnus] to [anyus], *cyclus* from [kyklus] to [chiklus] or [siklus], *descendere* from [deskendere] to [deshendere], etc. The vowels ae/oe/e came to coincide in [e], as also the vowels i/y in [i]. The consonant c- underwent palatalization in specific phonetic contexts (before e,i,y): a replay of the Kentum/Satem shift. Further, -s- between vowels was softened to [z], -gn- between vowels was modified to [ny].

Yet, the treasure of Classical Latin literature was not abandoned in the Middle Ages: Virgil's verses were still recited, but with a different pronunciation, and in spite of the fact that the Latin actually used in church and classroom had a considerably different grammar from that which was read in the Classics. Meanwhile, new Latin literature was also produced, and Latin was exerting a considerable influence on the development of the vernaculars. Until the original Latin pronunciation was reconstructed in the 20th century,

pupils have recited Virgil and declamated Cicero in the Medieval rather than the original pronunciation. Similarly, the Vedic hymns may well be older than the language form in which they have been preserved till today. In fact, in the case of the Vedic hymns, the scope for changes is bigger because they were transmitted orally and (so it is presumed) in the absence of the control exerted by a text, so that small and subtle changes could accumulate over generations to produce substantial change.

Madhav M. Deshpande has effectively developed the theory that the original Rg-Veda did not have the cerebral sounds.[23] He claims these sounds crept in when the centre of Brahminical learning had shifted from Sapta-Sindhu to the Ganga basin, where the Indo-Aryan dialects had developed the dental-cerebral distinction. In fact, the Veda recension which we have today (the Mandukeya and Shakalya recensions, which Deshpande dates to 700 BC), was established in Videha-Magadha (Bihar), where native speakers imposed their pronunciation on the Veda. That there were differences in pronunciation was fully realized in those days: passages in the Brahmana and Aranyaka literature give instructions on which pronunciation to adopt, and generally subscribe to the view that Brahmavarta (the Ganga-Yamuna Doab) has the best pronunciation. Meanwhile, the dental-cerebral distinction, conquered the north-west, slightly affecting the Dardic languages (Kashmiri) and even the Iranian language Pashtu.

In this scenario, we see how originally Vedic and Iranian were in one camp (the one without the dental/cerebral distinction), the non-Vedic Old Indo-Aryan in the other; and that subsequently, "recensional" Vedic and its Prakrit-enriched evolute, Classical Sanskrit, were brought into the other camp. The Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European was not first divided into an Indic branch, being Sanskrit and its Old Indo-Aryan offspring, and an Iranian branch; but rather into a "Proto-Indo-Iranian" branch from which both Iranian and Vedic sprang, and the "Pre-Vedic Indo-Aryan", which is the direct ancestor of the modern Indo-Aryan languages.[24] The latter category comprises the dialects of the Ganga and also those of a more southerly belt from Gujarat eastward; they are the ones developing the dental/cerebral distinction, and passing it on to the dialects of the Brahminical heartland (and beyond) in the north-west.

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[23] Madhav M. Deshpande: *op.cit.*, p.235-315.
[24] Deshpande shows this process in a neat scheme in *op.cit.*, p.269.

Deshpande notices that the classical Sanskrit grammarians (first millennium BC) are aware that the distribution of dental and cerebral consonants has not yet stabilized in Sanskrit at that time: the conquest of the entire Indo-Aryan speech area by the cerebrals was only approaching its completion.

Deshpande, though apparently working within the framework of the Aryan Invasion theory, expresses sympathy for (but claims no competent judgment on) S.R. Rao's reading of the Harappan script as Sanskrit-related rather than Dravidian. Indeed, in S.R. Rao's reading, the Harappan alphabet (roughly 2000-1700 BC) does not contain cerebral consonants, just like the related Phoenician and the later Iranian alphabet. If this reading is correct, it would confirm Deshpande's thesis that the Indo-Iranian language spoken in roughly the area where the Vedas were composed, did not know the dental/cerebral distinction at (again, roughly) the time when the Vedas were composed.

Though Deshpande does not seem to notice it, his scenario corroborates the theory that the Iranians originally lived in Sapta-Sindhu along with the Vedic Aryans, while non-Vedic Indo-Aryans lived further in India's interior, from Gujarat to Bihar.

One question that remains unanswered by Deshpande's theory, is whether the cerebral sounds were native to Dravidian and adopted by Indo-Aryan, or the other way round. He mentions earlier scholars who have pleaded for an internal Indo-European origination, and I may add that recent advocates of an Indian Urheimat theory have equally supported this view, apparently on the assumption that borrowing these typically Indian sounds from Dravidian would imply an Aryan invasion. Deshpande does uphold the position of a Dravidian origin for the cerebrals, which he believes to have been introduced into Indo-Aryan by Aryanized Dravidian speakers.

But this "Dravidian substratum" theory has its problems too. If the supposedly Dravidian feature of dental/cerebral distinction spread through the Indo-Aryan speech area from east to west, with present-day Bihar as an area where it was strongly present at an early stage, this would imply that the Dravidian substratum population lived that far to the north-east. Though Bihar has preserved some non-Aryan speech pockets, the only Dravidian one among them, the Oraon tribe in Bihar's south-west, itself has a tradition that its ancestors had come from the west, along the Narmada river.

No marked influence of Dravidian on the neighbouring Mundari languages (the Munda and Santali speech pockets in the south of Bihar) is known. Moreover, as we shall see, the influence of Dravidian on the vocabulary of Indo-Aryan is not very great either, certainly less than that of French on English, Sanskrit on Cambodian, Pali on Thai, which are cases where even a large borrowing of vocabulary was not sufficient to trigger a borrowing of sounds. We abstain from further guesses on the origin of the dental/cerebral distinction, but notice that even the experts have not yet solved the question, i.e. they have not extracted any proof of the Aryan Invasion theory from it.

Apart from the cerebral sounds, other pan-Indian language features have been claimed to exist, which can only be explained by Dravidian substratum influence. These are aspects of sentence formation which render it easy to translate a Kannada sentence into a Bengali sentence by means of a word-by-word translation, something which would not work in a translation between, say, English and Bengali; we will look into them shortly. Alternative explanations for this phenomenon of pan-Indian language features could be proposed: Indo-Aryan may have borrowed from Dravidian when large groups of Dravidians migrated to the Indus/Saraswati metropolitan area (the way Germanic tribes settled in the Roman empire and influenced late Latin), rather than because Aryans imposed their language on a Dravidian area they invaded. Or, it may be an internal development of the Prakritic languages which subsequently spread to Dravidian.

But how "pan-Indian" and how distinctively Indian are these common features in reality? Let us state first of all that they extend only partly to the Austric languages. Where they do affect the Indian Austric languages, it is clearly due to influence from the Indian surroundings, setting these languages apart from their cousins in Indochina; essentially, by "pan-Indian" we mean Dravidian plus Indo-Aryan, while influence on Austric (as on the language isolates Burushaski and Nahali) is secondary.

The main problem with the postulate of India as a grammatically homogeneous country due to the substratum influence of a pan-Indian Dravidian speech community and later-imposed Indo-European languages, is that the claimed similarities between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian often turn out to extend to countries where neither Dravidian nor Indo-European substratum influence is plau-

sible. Colin Masica has mapped the areas in which the five pan-Indian language characteristics usually cited, are in evidence.[25]

1. The word order Subject-Object-Verb ("Ram Sita saw" rather than "Ram saw Sita") is in common with the Altaic and Siberian languages, Korean, Japanese, Iranian, Tibeto-Burman, and even with Ethiopian languages.
2. The morphological causative (Hindi *KaaTnaa*, "to cut", yields "*kaTaanaa*", "to cause (someone) to cut") is in common with Baltic, Uralic, Altaic, Siberian, Japanese, Ethiopian and other African languages.
3. The conjunctive participle or gerund (Hindi *jaa-kar dekho*, "having gone, see" to express English "go and see") is in common with Slavic, Altaic, Iranian, Tibeto-Burman, Korean and Japanese.
4. The compound verb (*banaanaa*, "to make", *banaa dena* "to make for someone"; *lenaa*, "to take", *le jaanaa*, "to take away", *le aanaa*, "to bring") is in common with Burmese, Altaic, Japanese, Korean and Ethiopian (Masica may not be aware that it also exists in Chinese).
5. The dative-of-subject construction (*mujhe bhuukh hai*, "to me is hunger", *mujhe jaanaa hai*, "to me is to go", for "I am hungry" and "I have to go") is in common with Burmese.

Peter Edwin Hook points out that "the traits selected by Masica do not define an Indian linguistic area distinct from neighbouring regions. Nor is it a case of randomly distributed features happening to coincide in India. Rather, India appears on the map as the southern lobe of a greatly extended linguistic area that runs from South Asia through Central Asia and ends in Northeast Asia."[26] These findings open up an extremely interesting line of research. These linguistic relations (perhaps to be corroborated by archaeology, cultural anthropology etc.) involve greater complexity and a greater time-depth than the postulated process of Dravidian influence on Indo-Aryan in the second and first millennium BC.

A second problem for the Dravidian Substratum theory is that the high degree of grammatical similarity between the Prakrits and Dravidian is not accompanied by a proportionate degree of bor-

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[25] C. Masica: *Defining a Linguistic Area: South Asia*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1976; related by Peter Edwin Hook in Deshpande and Hook: *op.cit.*, p 35-37.

[26] P.E. Hook: *op.cit.*, p.37.

rowing Dravidian vocabulary into the Indo-Aryan Prakrits. Normally, many words are borrowed before any influence on grammar appears; in the case of Greek, there is little modification of the Indo-European grammar even after borrowing one third of the vocabulary. Therefore, if the grammatical similarity is to be explained by influence, it should be influence of Prakrit on Dravidian, because Dravidian has borrowed many more words from Indo-Aryan (even if mostly in its Sanskritic form).

The common Indo-European language material has been scrutinized for clues regarding the Urheimat question. For the last two centuries, scholars have tried to extract from the linguistic material indications on where the original Proto-Indo-European was spoken. Four possible sources of information come to mind: names of flora and fauna, place names, relative location of different branches or linguistic features in later periods, and signs of contact with other languages or languages families.

One of the oldest approaches to the Urheimat question consisted in scanning the common Indo-European vocabulary for terms that provide geographical clues. This "linguistic paleontology" would reveal the material setting of the original Indo-European culture. The all-Indo-European common words for certain plants (beech, birch) and animals (salmon) were read as indicators of the *Urheimat* environment, and they seemed to exclude warm countries like the Mediterranean and South Asia: for instance, the wolf is among them, but not the elephant, nor the donkey. On closer consideration, this turned out to be a circular proof (though in popular literature it is still cited). If the Indo-European languages did originate in South Asia, and originally had a common term for elephant, but people emigrated to elephantless territories, then after a while they would forget and lose that word, and you would get exactly the situation which was given as proof that the Urheimat must have been elephantless territory.

Moreover, it is not uncommon for words to slightly shift their meanings. The Indo-European word **bhagos* means (and is the etymon of the English word) "beech", but the related Greek word *phagos* means "oak". The word for "salmon" can mean "trout" in areas where the salmon is unknown, etc., and these shifts in meaning cannot be reliably reconstructed (apart from the fact that our palaeo-botanical knowledge has increased since the heyday of linguistic paleontology, and we now know that the beech did exist to

the East of the Black Sea, that the birch did exist in the steppe area, etc.). A final objection is that people have always had some words for entities of which they had only heard: even most land-locked peoples have a word for "sea".

Deriving original locations from the present-day relative locations of the members of a language family is tricky business. Within the Iranian group, Ossetic belongs to the East-Iranian sub-group but is now the westernmost member of the group, while Baluchi, now the southeasternmost member, belongs to the west-Iranian sub-group. More or less anything is possible in the geographical location of the original language vis-a-vis its present-day descendants. Arguments like: "South Russia is the Indo-European homeland because it is situated in the centre of the Indo-European expansion area", are therefore not valid.

Names of rivers and mountains are often adopted by newcomers from the natives, and may therefore survive changes in language. In eastern Europe, we have the rivers Don, Donau (Danube), Dn-iepr, Dn-iestr: clearly, an ancient word for "water" or "river" underlies these names; it has been linked with the Indo-European water-goddess Dana. However, it is by no means an absolute rule that newcomers adopt the existing name, and esp. those with a high prestige may impose their own nomenclature.

As for India, the one attempt at reading Dravidian etymologies into North-Indian place-names which I have seen is not very convincing. Common Indo-Aryan roots like *kot-* (fort) and *sar-* (water-flow), which appear frequently as place-name components, are forced into Dravidian explanations (even if *kot* is borrowed from Dravidian, it was so early enough to allow the Indo-Aryans to use it in creating place-names). The word *agar-* is included while the authors themselves admit that it is a common Indo-European word (Latin *ager*, Dutch *akker*, "field"); the term ar- (plough) is explicitly related to Latin-derived *arable* so that even the existence of a Kannada word *ar* with a related meaning cannot make it a Dravidian loanword, etc.[27] At most, the list of presumed common Aryan-Dravidian words could prove a genetic link or a process of borrow-

[27] Satyanarayan Das and Sunanda Das: *Dravidian in North Indian Toponymy*. Incidentally, the claim that Indo-Aryan does not know the root *ar-* with an agricultural meaning (which it has in other Indo-European branches: *arable*) and that this proves the unfamiliarity of the Proto-Indo-Europeans with agriculture, is refuted by its appearance in a South-Indian language which must have borrowed it from Indo-Aryan.

ing before Proto-Indo-European split into its daughter languages, implying that the Urheimat was a land partly shared with the Dravidians, most likely India. In such exercises, one should also keep in mind that the oldest Dravidian words attested in writing appear two millennia later than Vedic Sanskrit (*Sangam* literature in Tamil, earliest centuries AD).

The one important North-Indian geographical name that is most probably borrowed, is the river name *Ganga*. Like old Chinese (Yangzi-) *kiang*, it seems to be derived from the word for "river" in Austric, which must have been the dominant language group from present-day Shanghai to Calcutta (the related Vietnamese *Me-kong* is claimed by Indian scholars to be a returned loan-word via Sanskrit *Ma Ganga*). But in the case of Austric too, hardly any geographical names beyond its present territory are attested.

Exchange of loan-words with other language-families does provide an apparently reliable clue. On this basis, we know for sure that the Uralic peoples have been the neighbours of successive Indo-European peoples, *and* that they were not yet their neighbours in their original homeland: it is only some branches of Uralic that are influenced by some branches of Indo-European. Words derived directly from united Proto-Indo-Iranian or from separated Indo-Aryan include **asura*, "lord"; **sapta*, "week" (<"seven", suggesting but not proving that this unit of time was imported into the Uralic cultures); **sasar*, "sister". It could prove contact by long-distance trade as much as by neighbourly relations, but either way, it is not in conflict with a migration from India towards the Uralic region.

Contact with Akkadian (Semitic) is also attested, though by just a few words, and here again, this contact may have taken place long after the break-up of the original Indo-European, or may have come about through trade-contact between peoples who were not neighbours at all. It concerns only a handful of words, not particularly related to government or high culture, but rather to tools and domesticated animals (e.g. *gedi*/goat).

Believers in the Aryan Invasion theory have done their best to attribute Dravidian etymologies to Sanskrit words. The basis for doing so is that a word has no established kinship with words in the other branches of the Indo-European family, or that they have sound combinations not derivable from reconstructed Proto-Indo-

European, or that they somehow look Dravidian. Once these roots have been stamped as Dravidian, derived words and names are also given a Dravidian association, even if their root word had been fully integrated by the time they were coined. It is on this basis that Vedic names like Agastya, Pramaganda, Ikshvaku have been declared testimonies of a Dravidian presence in the Vedic culture, even while consonant clusters like in I-*kshv*-aku and Aga-*sty*-a are already decidedly non-Dravidian and show that a possible Dravidian connection was only a distant memory.

To take up one example, the name *Agastya* is a normal Sanskritic derivative of the tree name *agasti*. This word is proposed to be a loanword, related to Tamil *akatti*, *acci*, meaning "western-Indian pea tree". That non-Indian branches of Indo-European do not have this word, says nothing about its possible Indo-European origins: they didn't need a word for a tree that only exists in India. It is perfectly possible that the Tamil word was derived from *agasti*, which may be purely Indo-European or a loan-word from yet another language (say, the ancestor of Nahali, a tribal language not belonging to any known family). It is up to those who claim a Dravidian origin to explain the irregular addition of [s] between *akatti* and *agasti*; the spontaneous addition of [r] to a consonant in a borrowed word is well-attested (*Tamil* becoming *Dramila/Dravida*, or in a different context, Greek *dekanos* becoming *drekkana*), but the proposed addition of [s] would be the only such case in Franklin Southworth's list of Dravidian loans into Indo-Aryan.[28] By contrast, the elision of the Indo-European [s] or [sh] upon borrowing into the cluster-unfriendly Dravidian, is attested in the same list: Dravidian *kattai*, "wood", from Sanskrit *kashtha*; *kumatti*, "watermelon" from Sanskrit *kushmanda* (itself perhaps from Austric). In general, Dravidian has a strong tendency to elision of consonants: *alai*, "shed", from Sanskrit *shala*, "dining-hall"; *ur* from *pura*, "town". Without claiming certainty, it is at least safer to assume that *agasti/akatti* was borrowed from Indo-European into Dravidian rather than the reverse.

Far too many Indo-Aryan words of undecided etymology have been declared Dravidian or Austric loans. Words not attested in other Indo-European languages can still be Indo-European, considering the richness of the vocabulary esp. in the Indic branch, and

[28] Franklin C. Southworth: "Lexical Evidence for Early Contacts between Dravidian and Indo-Aryan", in Deshpande and Hook: *op.cit.*, p.191-233.

can only be declared loan-words if their presence and demonstrable anteriority in the supposed source language has been attested. That a word does not fit into the reconstruction of the differentiation of Proto-Indo-European, is a *petitio principii*: it has been reconstructed on the basis of Sanskrit and other branches, but has hardly taken the internal development of the Prakrits (esp. those belonging to the areas south and east of the Vedic area) and their influence on Sanskrit into account. To sum up, F.B.J. Kuiper's estimate that 5 to 9% of Vedic vocabulary is non-Indo-European (see ch.1.7), must be considered an exaggeration, though of course his basic postulate that there has been some Dravidian influence, remains valid.

However, even those linguists who are in a hurry to declare Indo-Aryan words to be borrowed from Dravidian and Austric, are surprised to find how small their harvest is. Thus, in a survey of plant and animal names (the very domain in which borrowing, esp. by invaders from natives, is the most likely) in Hindi, it is found that 19.4% are derived directly from original Indo-European sources, i.e. identifiable at every stage from Proto-Indo-European through Old Indo-Aryan down to modern Hindi. But of the remaining 80.6%, "the surprising thing is that *only a small proportion of this remainder is either Dravidian or Austric*, even by generous estimates".[29] The 80.6% dubbed as "non-Aryan" comprises 3.2% "Indo-Iranian" (i.e. attested in this but not in other branches of Indo-European), 21.3% "Persian" (including Arabic loan-words), 2.5% of known exotic origin (e.g. *tamatar/tomato* from Amerind), 8% Hindi descriptive formations, 22% of unknown origin but which existed in Sanskrit (i.e. Indo-Aryan but so far not traced to Proto-Indo-European), 9% unexplained words (divided in 5.4% for which at least earlier forms have been reconstructed, and 3.6% others); and only 9.5% of Dravidian and 5.7% of Austric origin.

And even here, as the author says himself, the estimate has been "generous". Thus, *ghora*, "horse", has a known Sanskrit etymology (*ghotaka*), and *muli*, "radish", can easily be derived from Sanskrit *mula*, "root" (parallel to the common etymology of the two English names). Whether Sanskrit *karpasa* is derived from Austric *kapas*, or the other way round, is by no means decided, and plausi-

[29] Colin P. Masica: "Aryan and Non-Aryan Elements in North Indian Agriculture", in Deshpande and Hook: *op.cit.*, p.55-152, specifically p.131. Emphasis in the original.

bility pleads in favour of a Sanskrit origin. Moreover, a number of these borrowings do not fit the scenario that "Aryans adopted the term from the native Dravidians" because the item itself was not native to North India, but was imported there in recent millennia along with its original South-Indian name. Short, as evidence of a Dravidian substratum in North-India, or of an Austric substratum in more westerly parts of North India, the agricultural vocabulary of Hindi is not convincing, on the contrary.

To the extent that there has been borrowing between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian, the quantitative proportion and the compared semantic domains of the loan-words also provide interesting information. After surveying the lexical material, Franklin Southworth observes: "The contact which produced these borrowings must have been a rather prolonged one, probably persisting over several centuries. This is indicated by the nature of the words borrowed, which include not only the usual technological terms (borrowed in both directions), but also some words of high-frequency general vocabulary, terms for body parts, and words relating to social structure. No picture of technological, cultural or military dominance by either side emerges from an examination of these words. Dravidian apparently borrowed, among others, terms relating to wheeled vehicles, while Old Indo-Aryan borrowed various terms relating to household technology."[30]

The relation was not like that between, say, English and Hindi, with one language borrowing material every-day terms and the other borrowing high-culture terms. Aryans and Dravidians were simply two neighbouring populations of a roughly equal level of civilization, with Gujarat probably the chief area of contact. In what political structure they co-existed is not yet clear, but colonial stereotypes of civilized vs. barbaric definitely don't apply.

In many cases, the direction of borrowing cannot be determined, and the possibility exists that both Indo-Aryan and Dravidian have borrowed from a third language group. Just like the absence of correlates for Indo-Aryan words in other branches of Indo-European has been used to suggest that these words must have been borrowed from other Indian languages, so now the absence of Elamite correlates for Dravidian words is interpreted as showing that these words have also been borrowed into Dravidian (tenta-

[30] Southworth: *op.cit.*, p.203-204.

tively, as our knowledge of the Elamite vocabulary is certainly incomplete).

The idea that similarities between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian in phonology, lexicon and grammar have to be explained from a Dravidian substratum, is increasingly abandoned in favour of the assumption that common features of Indo-Aryan and Dravidian were borrowed from an even earlier substratum language spoken in the Indus/Saraswati basin (which might be related to one of the still-existing language isolates Burushaski and Nahali). Commenting on the "argument that retroflex consonants and other structural features in the Rg-Veda (such as the gerund construction) are the result of contact with Dravidian speakers", Southworth asks his colleagues to consider "the possibility that these features might have come into Dravidian through the same process, i.e. contact with languages which existed in South Asia when Dravidian speakers reached there... While the features used to argue the presence of a Dravidian substratum are present in Dravidian, they have not been shown to exist in Elamite. Therefore, it is possible that some of these features have their origin in an even earlier linguistic substratum."[31]

A promising line of research is the study of genetic links between language families. Proto-Indo-European may well be the sister of the ancestor-language of other language families. Exciting theories have been launched to establish the kinship of many language families, postulating common ancestor-languages as being spoken 12 or 20 millennia ago. Thus, early this century the Danish scholar Holger Pedersen postulated a common ancestor for Altaic, Uralic, Eskimo-Aleut, Semitic and Indo-European, which he called *Nostratic* (Joseph Greenberg replaces this somewhat eurocentric term, with *Eurasiatic*, while A.B. Dolgopolsky calls it *Boreic*). More recently, the Soviet scholar Vladislav Illich-Svitych added other members to the macrofamily (but left Eskimo-Aleut outside his considerations): Afro-Asiatic (including Semitic, but also the language families of northern Africa), Kartvelian (South Caucasian) and Dravidian; while the Altaic member is now taken to include Japanese and Korean.[32] Remark that this family includes speakers belonging to the most divergent races: whitemost Scandinavians

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[31] Southworth, *ibid.*, p.206.

[32] The whole story is told by Colin Renfrew: "Before Babel: Speculations on the Origins of Linguistic Diversity", *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 1(1), p.3-23.

and yellowmost Koreans as well as black Ethiopians.

Illich-Svitych has listed no less than 600 roots each attested in several members of the macrofamily, a list expanded by Dolgopolsky to 1500. While this lexical material could perhaps be explained with a different model than that of a proto-language dispersing from an Urheimat (viz. convergence of unrelated languages by borrowing), the leading archaeologist Colin Renfrew very tentatively proposes to link this proto-language with the common material culture attested in the palaeolithic population of Europe and western Asia in about 25,000 BC, from which a linguistic unity would have emerged.[33] Euro-chauvinists will be relieved to learn that if Europe is not the Urheimat of Indo-European, it may well be the Urheimat of Nostratic, which is even more impressive; but on this point, Renfrew's proposal has been widely rejected as really too speculative.

Even links between Eurasian language families and the three macrofamilies of the American languages have been plausibly established, knowing that the migration to America may date back to 20,000 years ago: Eskimo-Aleut would be a member of the proposed "Nostratic" superfamily, therefore a sister of the Altaic, Indo-European etc. families; Amerind a sister of the Nostratic proto-language itself; Na-Dene a sister of North-Caucasian (which has already been tentatively linked with Iberian, Etruscan and Sino-Tibetan).[34] Several root words have been traced in very diverse language families. Thus, a root ***mlg/mlk*** is attested in Afro-Asiatic (suck, breast), Indo-European (milk, to milk), Uralic (breast), Dravidian (swallow, chew, throat), Amerind (swallow, throat), and Eskimo-Aleut (suck). In this perspective, it is not far-fetched to postulate genetic links between Proto-Indo-European and other proto-languages such as Proto-Dravidian.

Indian scholars have tried to establish the link between Dravidian and Indo-European, sometimes even denying that these are two different language families. Ultimately they are probably related, as components of the said *Nostratic* macrofamily, along with Uralic,

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[33] Renfrew: *op.cit.*, p.8-9. He also relates N.S. Trubetzkoy's 1939 hypothesis of linguistic kinship through convergence of different languages rather than through divergence from a common ancestor. This hypothesis is completely untenable for Indo-European, but may (building hypothesis upon hypothesis) acquire relevance for Nostratic.

[34] Joseph H. Greenberg and Merritt Ruhlen: "Linguistic Origins of Native Americans", in *Scientific American*, 11/1992.

Altaic and others. But as the geographical spread of this macro-family demonstrates, this type of genetic link is hardly more informative about specific Urheimat questions than the fact that all mankind one day emigrated from Africa.

However, there is a language family that has more unexpected similarities with Indo-European, similarities which provide a much stronger geographical clue: Austronesian. In some pronouns, the first four numerals and other elementary vocabulary, the similarity is too striking to be missed. That at least was the thesis of Isidore Dyen presented at the Third Indo-European Conference in 1966 (I am not aware of any follow-up, let alone refutation).[35] The relation is one between the entire Austronesian and the entire Indo-European family, indicating that it pre-dates their split into daughter languages. Further, it so happens that some Austronesian languages have the typically Indian cerebral or retroflex consonants; it is possible that this was an original feature of Proto-Austronesian, which its other daughter languages have lost.[36]

As for the language structure, to my knowledge the similarity between Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Austronesian is not established as being much above statistical coincidence. It is presumbly less than that between Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Semitic (which also has a case system, vowel changes, three numbers, grammatical gender, etc.), which latter is still not enough to convince all linguists of a genetic relationship (except in the distant past of the presumed Nostratic) rather than an influence through contact. The similarities between Indo-European and Austronesian vocabularies may therefore better be explained through contact than through a genetic relationship. The objection that something as elementary as the first four numbers can hardly be borrowed, is not valid: the Andamanese language had no numbers at all (only words for "single" and "pair") till the other day, and the numbers *six* and *seven* are so closely similar between Indo-European and Semitic that they too seem to have been borrowed one way or the other. As for pronouns, polite forms of address are known to be

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[35] Isidore Dyen: "Background 'noise' or 'evidence' in comparative linguistics: the case of the Austronesian-Indo-European Hypothesis", in George Cardona et al., eds.: ***Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*** (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1966),p. 431-440.

[36] M. Deshpande writes that "the origin of retroflexion in Javanese is controversial" and that "the existence of retroflexes in Proto-Austronesian is [a] hotly debated issue"; *op.cit.*, p.305.

borrowed from prestigious languages and subsequently losing their special status to become ordinary pronouns. Moreover, their common elements are not shared with other language families, which indicates a specific process of bilateral contact rather than a common origin as part of a macro-family. Rather than just being sisters within the supposed Nostratic superfamily (of, say, 15,000 BC) which has spread to the farthest corners of the Eurasian continent, Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Austronesian would have to have been in contact after they became distinct languages, but before they split up into their daughter-languages, say in 6,000 BC. Given their present as well as their oldest known geographical locations, it is hard to imagine another common habitat for these two than India.

It is through very detailed studies of all aspects of the languages that these ancient links will be established further, and our brief survey does not warrant any definitive conclusions. A negative conclusion which is not in conflict with any firm finding so far, is that a possible location of the Indo-European Urheimat in India remains an undisproven possibility, even if it has not been positively proven either.

2.6. The other branches of Indo-European

Let us see what common knowledge about the other branches of the Indo-European family may contribute.

1. *Greek.* From linguistic evidence, we understand that, on their way to Greece, the Greeks first supplanted or absorbed an earlier Indo-European people, and a highly cultured non-Indo-European native population in Greece proper. These natives, whose habitat had earlier covered most of the Balkan, had used an as yet undeciphered writing system going back in its mature form to beyond 3000 BC, and in its earlier form even beyond 5000 BC. They may have retreated to Crete and founded the Minoic civilization there. The Cretan Linear-A script, also not yet deciphered (though sometimes claimed to be Semitic), seems to be a continuation of this earlier script. The Greeks were illiterate, but in Crete they developed the Linear-B script, long before the mainland Greeks borrowed the Phoenician alphabet.

Here we really find a story fitting the picture of barbarians overrunning a civilization, partly destroying it and partly being civilized by it. The advance of the proto-Greeks through the Balkan

provides the model which the Invasionists have projected onto the Vedic-Harappan history: the original agricultural civilization being overrun by semi-nomadic horsemen. But there is a crucial difference: in the Balkan, this relatively violent scenario is attested by archaeological findings of many settlements having been burnt down, a feature absent in the decline of the Harappan civilization.

2. *Illyrian.* Neighbouring the Greeks, the Illyrians are another Indo-European people living in the Balkan, today represented only by the Albanians (whose language was heavily turkicized during the Ottoman occupation). Their descent into the Balkan must have been very roughly contemporary with that of the Greeks. I have no information on the relevance of their language to the reconstruction of the Indo-European dispersal. The Slavic peoples that now make up the majority of the Balkan population (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bulgars, Macedonians), only arrived in the first centuries AD.

3. *Celtic and Italic.* It is commonly accepted that the Celtic and Italic peoples were invaders into their classical habitats. In France, Spain, and the British Isles, a large pre-Indo-European population existed, probably comprising at least two distinct language families. Of the Pictish, Iberian and Etruscan languages, only some written fragments have been preserved. The Basque language survives till today, but attempts to link it to distant languages remain unsuccessful. The two Causasian language families are popular candidates for tentative connections with each of these languages. At any rate, this area witnessed a classic case of Indo-European expansion, resulting in the near-complete celtization or latinization of western and southern Europe.

The Celts' itinerary can be archaeologically traced to Slovakia and Hungary, and Germany still preserves some Celtic place-names. The Italic peoples' itinerary is harder to trace, though of course Virgil's story that the Romans are the descendants of the Trojans who fled westward after their defeat against the Greeks, is not historical in its details. Then again, it is significant that the Romans do have an immigration legend, and that what much immigration legend they have, concerns an immigration from the east. In the 19th century, French scholars eagerly explored the possibility that Italic and Celtic had continued for long as a single language group. Such a scenario would have helped in strengthening the French nation's historical identity, otherwise split between a bio-

logical Celtic ancestry and linguistic Latin roots. Today, the prevalent opinion is that Celtic and Italic were not closer to each other than either is to Germanic or Greek.

At any rate, it is accepted that Europe south of the Alps and west of the Rhine was definitely taken over by the Indo-Europeans from an earlier population.

4. *Germanic, Baltic and Slavic.* In the case of the Germanic peoples, there is no literary or archaeological indication of an immigration, nor of the replacement or assimilation of an earlier population. The Germanic area has gradually increased and come to comprise England, Bavaria, Switzerland and Austria, while the border with the Slavic neighbours has shifted east and west several times.

There is evidence that the Germanic people once lived in Central Asia. The Germanic word *mare* (female horse) is not attested in other branches of Indo-European except the neighbouring Celtic (where it may be a loan from Germanic) and Slavic, but is obviously related to the Altaic **mari-ka* and Chinese *ma*, "horse". A few Germanic words are not attested in the other Indo-European branches but are apparently in common with the Ket language still spoken in the Yenisei area, notably the word *house* (from Proto-Germanic **hus* < **kus*, Ket *qus*). Indo-European loan-words in Ket seem to have come originally through the Germanic branch, e.g. *kuos*, "cow" (later from Scythian Iranian, e.g. *arta*, "true").[37] In an Indian Urheimat theory, this makes perfect sense: the Germanic people were among the first to enter Central Asia, where only Palaeo-Siberian, Uralic and Altaic were spoken then. Pushed onwards by the Baltic and Slavic peoples conquering their part of the steppes, they went to the Baltic sea and colonized the coastal areas of Scandinavia, Germany and Holland, leaving Belgium and southern Germany to Celtic and other populations almost until the time of the Roman conquests. Immigrating from the northeast, the Germanic peoples may have been latecomers in the European heartland, compared with the Celtic and Italic peoples.

The Baltic language group, represented today by Latvian and Lithuanian, may have covered a slightly larger area than today, but there is no literary memory of a migration from another area, ex-

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[37] Discussed in Satya Swarup Mishra: *The Aryan Problem, A Linguistic Approach*, p.50. However, the Ket words are not known in a form older than a few centuries, so it is risky to compare them with Germanic as it must have been 4000 years ago.

cept that many Lithuanians today will tell you that they originally came from India. Before this is declared to be an argument for the Indian Urheimat, it should be verified that this belief really predates the early 19th century, when this belief was the prevalent theory even among scholars throughout Europe. The folklore avidly recorded by nationalist philologists in the 19th century could contain not only age-old oral traditions of the common people but also some beliefs fashionable among those who recorded them.

The Slavic peoples have expanded to the west, into Poland and Czechia, and south-west, across the Danube, and in recent centuries also (back) to the east, across the Ural mountains. But otherwise, their habitat has been where it is now, for as far back in time as human memory can reach: Ukraine and South Russia.

When scholars from the Germanic, Baltic and Slavic countries started claiming their own country as the Indo-European Urheimat, this certainly made sense. At least, it was not in contradiction with known facts. Anywhere between the North Sea and the Caspian Sea could be the Urheimat, without contradicting the known early history of the nations living there. However, if one of these countries is indeed the Urheimat, it means that the other countries are not, even while their populations have no memory of a migration from the Urheimat to their present habitat. If this can happen to nine peoples out of ten, it may also happen to ten out of ten: perhaps the Urheïmat was outside the Germanic-Baltic-Slavic territory altogether. The first written records of these peoples are comparatively recent, and the true story of their migration had simply been lost.

5. *Hittite.* The Hittites, chief representatives of what is properly called the Anatolian branch, are a different story altogether. Hittite must have split off from Indo-European very early, some time before Indo-European had reached the stage of development which linguists (notably Karl Brugmann) have reconstructed as "Proto-Indo-European" on the basis of the other branches, chiefly Greek and Indo-Iranian. It seems to have preserved the laryngeal sounds (throat sounds as in Arabic; probably not more than the [h] or [kh] sound) which according to a popular theory must have been a feature of the oldest Indo-European. Outside Hittite, some phonetic side-effects are the only trace of these supposed laryngeals, chiefly in Greek, e.g. the Greek *anèr*, "man", would come from **Hnr*, turning the laryngeal *H-* into *a-*, whereas Sanskrit has simply lost the

sound, giving ***nr***, ***nara***, or has only preserved it in the form of vowel-lengthening in a prefix, as in ***sū-nara***. For another example, the initial vowel in Greek *odont-*, "tooth", shows trace of an initial *H-*, which Latin has lost, yielding *dent-*. While this is what modern textbooks will tell you, the laryngeal theory is by no means undisputed.

The grammar and morphology of Hittite are much less elaborate than those of reconstructed Indo-European, and it has been assumed (but by no means proven) that Hittite has not lost this elaborate morphology, but that Indo-European has developed it only after Hittite split off. The alternative is that Hittite was a kind of simplified Pidgin language synthesizing the languages of different ethnic groups, or that it had been simplified during a long history of wandering in foreign territory. That is the scenario which seems most plausible; it is confirmed by the cultural evidence, which shows a thorough assimilation of non-Indo-European elements, so that of the Hittite pantheon, the only identifiably Indo-European gods are *Indara* and *Shiush* (Dyaus).

It is not seriously doubted that the Hittites immigrated into their classical habitat during the 3d millennium BC. It is only Colin Renfrew's theory of an Anatolian Urheimat that requires the Hittites to be native to that area, and all the other Indo-European branches to be emigrants from there. The rationale of this construction is that the original split between Indo-European and Hittite occurred when the non-Hittites left the Urheimat while the Hittites stayed on, so that all the differences between the other groups are later, secondary developments compared to this first split. However, the notion that Hittite formed a separate language as a sister rather than a daughter of Proto-Indo-European, has now been rejected. One reason is that Hittite shows a lot of substratum influence (loanwords), indicating that like Greek, it was an invaders' language adopted by a native people which used to speak another language. Another reason (only valid when coupled with other reasons) is that in a split between Hittites and other Indo-Europeans, it is more plausible that the Hittite minority migrated, rather than the non-Hittite majority.

The Hittites were not the only Indo-Europeans in West Asia. There were firstly the Kassites, a ruling class in Mesopotamia towards the middle of the second millennium BC. Linguistically assimilated, they preserved some purely Vedic names: Shuriash,

Maruttash, Inda-Bugash, i.e. Surya, Marut, Indra-Bhaga (Bhaga meaning effectively "god", cfr. Bhag-wan, Slavic Bog).

Like the Kassites, the Mitanni people, who appeared in what is now Kurdistan in the second millennium (the Medes would only take this land after 1,000 BC), are definitely considered as foreign invaders. They were not more than a ruling class, and got easily absorbed into the host population. They have preserved Indo-Aryan names and terminology, closely related to Vedic Sanskrit, including the god-names Indra, Varuna and the Nasatyas. They are latecomers in the history of the Indo-European dispersal, appearing at a time when, leaving India out of the argument, at least the area from Iran to France was already Indo-European. They have little bearing on the *Urheimat* question, but they have all the more relevance for mapping the history of the Indo-Iranian group.

6. *Iranian.* The Iranians once controlled a much larger territory than today, after the Slavic and Turkic expansions. The Cimmerians and Scyths spread out over the steppes between Ukraine and the Pamir mountains: of this branch of the Iranians, only the Ossets in the northern Caucasus remain. The Sogdians made important contributions to culture and especially to Buddhist tradition, in what is now Tajikistan and the Fergana valley. Another, perhaps unsuspected branch of the Iranian family are the Croats: till the early Christian era, when they lived in what is now Slovakia, they spoke an Iranian language, which was later replaced by Slavic "Serbo-Croat". They call themselves *Hrvat*, from *Harahvaiti*, the name of a river in Western Afghanistan, which is merely the Persian form of *Saraswati.* In an Achaemenid inscription, the *Harahvaita* tribe is mentioned as one of the tribute-paying components of the Persian empire.

The Iranians are very clear about their history of immigration from Hapta-Hendu and Airyanam Vaejo. Their religious reformer Zarathustra, whom modern scholarship dates to the centuries before 1200 BC[38], lived in present-day Afghanistan, then a more domesticated land than today (the social setting of Zarathustra's teachings is definitely sedentary). Afghanistan was a half-way station, either from Central Asia (the fertile Fergana valley could be claimed as a likely well-spring of emigrations), or from India. At any rate, what is known of Iranian migrations, including the later

[38] *Cambridge History of Inner Asia* (p.15) puts him in the period 1450-1200 BC, others go as far back as 1800 BC.

tribal history of the Ossets and the Croats, indicates a westward migration from a source country not west of the Aral Lake. They might have come from the Indus area, and no known facts are done injustice to if we assume that the Iranians left the Indus area at the time when archaeology attests the decay of the cities, i.e. around 1750 BC. They may have brought the name of the lost Saraswati river along with them and given it, in a phonetically evolved form, to a river in their new country (as they also did with the name Sarayu, becoming Harayu, also in western Afghanistan). The Iranian homelands Airyanam Vaejo, described as cold, and Hapta-Hendu, described as hot, are Kashmir and Sapta-Sindhu (Panjab-Rajasthan-Haryana) respectively. Those who want to deny it, have had to invent a second "land of seven rivers" as the common Indo-Iranian homeland, from which the Iranians' Vedic cousins took the name but not the memory into India; or to interpret the Avestan river-name *Ranha* (correlate of Sanskrit *Rasa*, the Puranic name of the Amu Darya or Oxus) as meaning the Volga.[39]

7. *Armenian.* The tribal traditions, historical as well as religious and mythological, have been lost almost completely due to a Christian campaign to destroy the entire Pagan heritage. It is probable that Phrygian and Thracian (Alexander's mother tongue) belonged to the same family, but these languages are extinct since before the Christian era. We do know certain things about them, e.g. that they were at a half-way stage between Satem and Kentum; if the Satem features won through completely in Armenian, it may well be due to the Iranian environment. Linguistically, Armenian shares some features with Greek on the one and Iranian on the other hand (to be distinguished from the large-scale borrowing from Iranian). Apparently it represents one stage of one long-drawn-out migration of which Greek and Iranian represent earlier and later stages, respectively.

8. *Tokharic and Proto-Bangani.* The Tokharic people lived in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) in the first millennium AD. We do not know of any Tokharic tradition on ancestral migration, but in this case it is the modern philologists who have attributed such a migration to them. The "problem" with the Tokhars is that they speak a Kentum language, i.e. the branch of Indo-European to which Germanic, Latin, Celtic and Greek belong. All these languages lie to

[39] E.g. Jean Haudry: *Les Indo-Europeens*, p.118.

the West of the other branch, the Satem languages: Baltic, Slavic, Armenian, and Indo-Iranian. So, the presence of Tokharic in the eastern corner of the Indo-European area requires an explanation.

From Greek and Roman sources, we know that the Tokharic people took Bactria from the Greeks who had settled there in the wake of Alexander's conquest, and that they came from Gansu (which became the westernmost province of China proper after Chinese settlement, making it a corridor of Chinese culture between Tibet and Mongolia). Chinese sources know them as the Yue-zhi (in Wade-Giles transcription: Yüeh-chih). According to Prof. A.K. Narain: "The ancient historical literature of China informs that the Yue-zhi people, who lived between Qi-lian mountain and Dunhuang, were forced to move out of their homeland on account of pressure from the Xiong-nu, and that they finally reached the Oxus valley in the 2nd century BC. They also add that while the 'Great' Yue-zhi moved west, the 'Small' Yue-zhi remained behind."[40]

While there is a consensus about identifying the Yue-zhi, even in the earliest references, with the Tokharic people, it is uncertain but quite possible that other "barbarians" mentioned in Chinese sources, notably the Wu-sun, the Gang-zhu and the Da-yuan, should equally be included in the Tokharic family (though the Wu-sun were the Yue-zhi's deadly enemy, but this does not exclude kinship). At any rate, the oldest historical records of the meticulous Chinese historians situate the Tokhars on China's western frontier.

Was the Gansu area the original homeland, or did the Tokharic people come from an Indo-European homeland much to the west? According to A.K. Narain: "It has been suggested that originally they had lived in the West and had migrated to the borderlands of China in a much earlier period so that their movement in the 2nd century BC was, in fact, a rebound journey to the West. Archaeology, however, has not yet substantiated any such theory. The trend of new discoveries seems to weaken the theories which seek a European home of the Indo-Europeans. Recent studies of Kurgan cultures indicate in the direction of the southern steppes of Russia. A careful re-examination of the [Central-Asian] Andronovo culture and its relationship with other cultures as well as meticulous pa-

[40] A.K. Narain: "Indo-Europeans in Inner Asia", in Denis Sinor ed.: *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, esp. p.153 ff. I have uniformized the Chinese spellings to the Pinyin system.

laeo-anthropological analysis of the burial finds may not exclude the possibility of a more easterly homeland for the Indo-Europeans in Inner Asia."[41] The term "Inner Asia" refers to the north-western quarter of the present People's Republic of China.

Other sources equally indicate very early contacts between Indo-Europeans and the Chinese, fossilized into Indo-European loan-words in Chinese, e.g. *ma*, "horse" (if not derived in both families from Altaic), *gou*, "dog", perhaps *sun*, "grand-son", *shi*, "lion". The Chinese-born scholar Tsung-tung Chang has pleaded that there were linguistic and cultural contacts between Indo-Europeans and late-neolithic Chinese peasants, who would have learned cattle-breeding from them.[42]

Prof. Narain opens a new perspective on the Urheimat question: "Suggestions have already been made to identify as Tokharian the Qi-qia culture in Gansu... It is not difficult to appreciate the recent argument that 'there probably was no Indo-European invasion on the western frontiers of China in the early years of the first millennium BC... for the single reason that the Indo-Europeans had been there since time immemorial'."[43] One indication is this: "In fact, 'there was a remarkable continuity in the development of the ceramic art of Gansu during two thousand years from 2500 to 500 BC'."[44]

Prof. Narain may also be quoted for a general restatement of the linguistic aspect of the matter: "Certainly, the linguistic evidence does not stand in the way of taking the Inner Asian 'Tokharian-land' as the original home of the Indo-Europeans, and their moving westward seems more reasonable than the other way round. In fact, this provides a better solution to the vexing problem of a lack of geographical correlation of the 'satem' and 'centum' dichotomy. Starting from the Tokharian homeland with an original K, it is easier to explain its retention in its essentially westward movement. The other outlying areas closer home show a different development (namely S), which can simply be treated as a reflex of original dialecal non-significant phonetic variation. It is a commonly no-

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[41] *ibid.*

[42] Cited by Stefan Zimmer: *Ursprache, Urvolk und Indogermanisierung*, p.25, with reference to Tsung-tung Chang: "Indo-European Vocabulary in Old Chinese", Sino-Platonic Papers no.7, Dpt. of Oriental Studies, University of Pennsylvania.

[43] A.K. Narain: *ibid.*, with reference to J. Prusek: *Chinese Statelets and the Northern Barbarians in the Period 1400-300 BC* (Dordrecht 1971).

[44] A.K. Narain: *ibid.*, with reference to J. Andersson: "Researches into the pre-history of the Chinese", *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, 1943.

ticeable phenomenon of dialect geography that a language tends to show greater variety closer home in its essential linguistic features than in its country of migration."[45]

Actually, the latter argument may be used differently: the general (but by no means absolute) rule that changes like the Kentum/Satem shift are to be expected in the heartland rather than in the periphery may apply with even more exactness than would be the case in Prof. Narain's hypothesis. Suppose the Tokharic people were among the earliest emigrants from the Urheimat, preserving the early Kentum forms and the early, rather simpler stage of Indo-European grammar. Slightly earlier, the Hittites had also emigrated, in the opposite direction. In the Urheimat, more or less equidistant between the Hittites' Anatolia and the Tokhars' Gansu, viz. in the upper Indus basin, the Indo-European language continued to develop, while speakers of newer and more developed versions of the language continued to emigrate, before as well as after the Kentum/Satem shift. While both the Inner Asian and the European Urheimat hypotheses are faced with the problem that both the Urheimat and the farthest "colony" are Kentum-speaking while between these two the nearer "colonies" form a Satem zone, the Indian Urheimat theory yields a neat division in a far, early-dispersal Kentum zone and a near, late-dispersal Satem zone.

Rather than jumping to the conclusion that the Tokharic heartland in Gansu was the Indo-European Urheimat, we should keep in mind that even if the indication of the continued Tokharic presence in "Inner Asia" since 2500 BC is valid, that still leaves a number of centuries between their earliest attested settlement and the probable split-off of both Tokharic and Hittite from the oldest Indo-European. Care is taken of these centuries if we suppose that Tokharic migrated from India at a time when Kentum was still the dominant variety in at least India's north-west.

This hypothesis has been reinforced by C.P. Zoller's recent discovery, small but dramatic, of what is called Proto-Bangani: a language spoken in North-India, now largely assimilated to the surrounding Prakritic dialects, but preserving a substratum of Kentum vocabulary, especially used in the context of old stories.[46]

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[45] *ibid.*

[46] The discovery of Proto-Bangani was announced at an international conference in Leiden (Netherlands) 1987. It is briefly described in R.S.P. Beekes: *Vergelijkende Taalwetenschap, Tussen Sanskrit en Nederlands* (Dutch: "Comparative Linguistics, Between Sanskrit and Dutch"), p.41-42.

Thus, its substratum word for "hundred" is *koto*. In the isolation of a mountain valley, this language may have abstained from the Satem shift, only to be overwhelmed by it at a later stage. Harmonizing the existence of Proto-Bangani with the theory of a European Urheimat will be very hard indeed, but it may well be a left-over of the original Kentum stage of Indo-European in India.

The distribution of the Satem and Kentum features is certainly a testimony in favour of the Indian Urheimat theory. The (admittedly fragmentary) migration legends of the different branches are also neatly compatible with an Indian Urheimat.

2.7. Physical anthropology

The fact that the Indo-European speech community includes people of diverse races, from the black-skinned Sinhalese to the white-skinned Scandinavians, definitely implies that the spread of the language cannot be equated with the spread of a people.

Thus, suppose the original speakers had been dark-eyed and dark-haired people, then, according to I.M. Diakonov: "If this population had migrated together with the languages, blue-eyed Balts could not have originated from it. Blue eyes, as a recessive characteristic, are met everywhere from Europe to the Hindu Kush. But nobody can be blue-eyed if neither of his/her parents had blue-eyed ancestors, and a predominantly blue-eyed population cannot originate from ancestors with predominantly black eyes. The biological situation among the speakers of modern Indo-European languages can only be explained through a transfer of languages like a baton, as it were, in a relay race, but not by several thousand miles' migration of the tribes themselves... The transfer of languages like a baton in a relay race refers precisely to the gradual spread of the speakers from the initial area (but not necessarily from inside of it!). Such an expansion can have only one reason: population growth in ecological conditions unusually favourable (for ancient times)."[47]

Population growth at that stage was the effect of agriculture. The Indo-European Urheimat was consequently a centre of agriculture, and the Proto-Indo-Europeans were a sedentary population, and not nomads as is often claimed: "Why does a migration happen? We have to distinguish two things in this context: the migra-

[47] Diakonov: *op.cit.*, p.153-154.

tions of nomads (and of other tribes uprooted by waves of nomadic migration) and other migrations. The Proto-Indo-Europeans were no nomads: their well-developed agricultural and social terminology testifies against this; and so does history: nomadism is mobile cattle-breeding with regular change of pasture on vast territories, either absolutely without agriculture (agricultural products were to be stolen or bought) or with underdevelopd subsidiary agriculture. Nomadism supposes riding with cattle: either horse-riding or camel-riding. Chariots are not suitable for tending cattle: they are no good on broken terrain and require very specialized service. The Middle East did not know true nomadism until the last centuries of the second millennium BC... Nomadism did not exist in Middle Asia... until the second millennium BC either."[48]

The charioteers of the Vedic culture were not fresh arrivals from the steppe, but members of a mature sedentary civilization. The spread of the Indo-Europeans, no matter from which Urheimat, largely took place before nomadism existed on a substantial scale. This setting allows for an Indo-European expansion in a gradual fashion, with gradual population transfer but mostly with transfer of culture and language to other settled populations. It seems logical that the spread of Indo-European was not a uniform process: in densely populated areas like Anatolia and much of Europe, the incoming Indo-Europeans must have been a small minority, but in the steppe lands, their entry may have substantially altered the racial composition of the population, enough to be noticed by modern physical anthropology.

While it is wrong to identify a speech community with a physical type, it is also wrong to discard physical anthropology completely as a source of information on human migrations in pre-literate times. We should keep in mind that our knowledge in this field may get outdated very fast because of new techniques along the lines of genetic finger-prints.

As already mentioned in ch.1.8, the start of the Kurgan culture is accompanied by a change in the racial composition of the population of South Russia in about 4500 BC: "The Dniepr-Donets people are known to be massive Cro-Magnons, continuous from the Upper Palaeolithic; the Strednij Stog-2 men are described as more gracile, tall-statured, dolichocephalic with narrow faces."[49] And again,

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[48] Diakonov: *op.cit.*, p.148-149.
[49] Editorial note in *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1977/4, p.345.

Maria Gimbutas writes: "The skeletal remains... are dolichomeso-cranial, taller-statured and of a more gracile type than those of their predecessors in the substratum."[50]

It is this new element which the Kurgan Urheimat school identifies as Indo-European. In that case, the cultural change was effected by an incoming new ethnic group. While V. Gordon Childe, probably the first to identify South Russia as the Urheimat, thought that the Urheimat population and/or culture had again come from more westerly regions, "Gimbutas, following most recent Russian work, has departed from Childe, to the extent of deriving the Kurgan cultures from the steppes on the Lower Volga and farther east... While linguistic opinion has been moving in the direction of putting the Indo-European homeland in the region of the Vistula, Oder or Elbe, archaeological opinion is now putting it in the Lower Volga steppe and regions east of the Caspian Sea."[51] The archaeological evidence also indicates an abrupt change, suggesting an immigration: "... Local evolution cannot account for such abrupt changes... The pottery is relatable to the earliest Neolithic in the Middle Urals and Soviet Central Asia."[52] I have not heard of any closer information about the provenance of this Kurgan people, but it is fair to observe that the racial type described here as typical of the first Kurgan-making community, is similar to what you find in India today, as also in the Harappan and pre-Harappan settlements.

But the two racial types co-existed for long, though they remained culturally distinct: "Kurgan II, ca. 4000-3500 BC. Materials from this period demonstrate continuous co-existence with the Dniepr-Donets culture: two different physical types (both of 'Cro-Magnon C' type, but with the Kurgan people being more gracile) and burial customs (collective burials in trenchlike pits characteristic of the Dniepr-Donets culture, and single burials of Kurgan type) were proved to be present even in the same villages."[53] While the

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[50] Marija Gimbutas: "Primary and Secondary Homeland of the Indo-Europeans, *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1985/1-2, p.191.

[51] Ward H. Goodenough: "The Evolution of Pastoralism and Indo-European Origins", in G. Cardona et al., eds.: *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, p.253-265, spec. p.255, with reference to V. Gordon Childe: *The Aryans. A Study of Indo-European Origins*, London 1926. This was written in 1966, when "birch" and "beech" considerations, now outdated, were still tempting people to locate the Urheimat in Germany/Poland "on linguistic grounds".

[52] M. Gimbutas: *ibid.*

[53] M. Gimbutas: "Proto-Indo-European Culture: The Kurgan Culture during the Fifth, Fourth and Third Millennia BC", in Cardona ed.: *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, p.178.

Kurgan population is distinct from the original South-Russian population, it is racially similar to the Central Asian people of at least the subsequent period: "There is... no doubt that the Afanasjevo and Bronze Age cultures of the Siberian steppes, the Andronovo and Tazanbagjab in the Aral Sea area, belong to the same Kurgan family and are represented by the same family of people."[54]

This means that the entire steppe land from the Yenisei to the Oxus and from Ukraine to the Altai was filled with a population more or less homogeneous in culture and physical type. And this discovery is not trivial: it marks a contrast with the situation in the later period, when much of this area got populated with distinctly Mongoloid types. Of course, it is hard to find out to which speech community this racially fairly homogeneous population of Central Asia belonged. Some say it is Proto-Uralic, but it may have originally been Palaeo-Siberian and subsequently indo-europeanized; we just do not know. But this population's presence in Central Asia was definitely not the effect of an eastward expansion of the Kurgan people: "If the anthropology of the Siberian Neolithic is of European nature, this European character must come from much earlier affinities that have to be sought in the Upper Palaeolithic..."[55]

It is usually assumed that the Proto-Indo-European-speaking population, must have belonged to the Caucasoid (or Europoid) race. If we were to assume that they belonged to the Negroid or to the Mongoloid race, it would imply that the language completely changed race in the course of its history: all Mongoloids or Negroids who spoke the language lost it, and the Caucasoids who did not originally speak it, acquired it. This is rather improbable, especially in the relatively short period between Proto-Indo-European and the earliest literature in Indo-European languages, and there is no further reason for doubting that the Caucasoid race was predominant in the population centre from which the Indo-European dispersal started.

The Caucasoid race was present in India (like in Europe and the Kurgan area, and unlike in sub-Saharan Africa, China or America) since hoary antiquity. Kailash Malhotra reports, starting with their geographical spread today: "The Caucasoids are found practi-

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[54] M. Gimbutas: *op.cit.*, p.177.
[55] P. Bosch-Gimpera: "The Migration Route of the Indo-Aryans", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1974/1, p.513-519, spec. p.514.

cally all over the country, though the preferred habitats have been river valleys and plains." (that is to say, they are not hill-dwellers, they have used the opportunity for cultivation afforded by the rivers rather than stick to a hunting-gathering economy)[56] The other groups are the Mongoloids, the Australoids and, confined to the Andaman islands, the Negritos. A caveat which is not unnecessary in the present context: "One point must be made clear at the outset, that we are not equating the above four morphological types with 'pure' races. As a matter of fact there is strong evidence of considerable admixture."

In the past, the Caucasian presence was also in evidence: "Although a large number of prehistoric sites have been excavated in India, only a few of them have yielded human osseous remains... None of the pre-Mesolithic sites have yielded skeletal material; the earliest remains are around 8,000 years old. An examination of the morphological features of skeletons from sites of the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic and iron age periods reveals the presence of Australoids and Caucasoids in all the periods, the absence of Mongoloids, and the existence of at least two types of Caucasoids, the dolichocephals and the brachycephals... The skeletal evidence thus clearly establishes the presence of Australoids and Caucasoids in India for at least 8,000 years."[57]

The Caucasoid race comprises the Nordic and Mediterranean subraces, of which the characteristics are present in the populations of India's northwestern c.q. central and southern parts. Most of India's Indo-European- and Dravidian-speaking populations belong to these subraces. Their racial type was in India since at least 8,000 years.

About the earlier history, we can make some plausible speculations. The racial type most adapted to the hot climate is the Australoid, in that its body characteristics are most marked by the need to dissipate heat (favoured by high area/mass ratio, reduction in cutaneous fold thickness) and to protect against the sunshine (dark pigmentation). The Mongoloid race is a product of a colder climate, and has indeed not moved far away from the cooler Himalaya and its foothills. The Caucasoid race was also formed in a colder climate, and if its presence in the extremely hot climate of

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[56] Kailash C. Malhotra: "Biological Dimensions to Ethnicity and Caste in India", in K.S. Singh: *Ethnicity, Caste and People*, p.63.
[57] *ibid.*

major parts of India is easily ascribed to immigration, it is partly on these purely physical grounds. But it may be repeated that this postulated immigration from colder areas must have taken place at least 8,000 years ago, before the dawn of civilization.

The world's "colder areas" could include the foothills of the western Himalaya and other regions in and near the Subcontinent, not to mention the impact of the Glacial periods, when the climate which shaped the low-pigmentation or "white" skin type was situated more to the south than it is today. Further, the fact that the Australian Aboriginals, who left the Old World from South Asia, are racially close to the Caucasoids (some of them even have blond hair) raises doubts about common assumptions about the geographical distributions of the races. So, about the far prehistory, we don't know to what extent the Caucasoid race was present in India, and about the proto-historical and early historical period, we know for fact that it was present in the same degree as it is today.

There are no indications that the racial composition and distribution of the Indian populations has substantially changed since the start of the Indo-European dispersal, which cannot reasonably be placed earlier than 6,000 BC. If the centre of this dispersal was the fertile and demographically encouraging area now known as Panjab, then the Indo-European emigrants must have belonged to the physical type still prevalent in the Panjab: Caucasoid with a marked Nordic streak.

This Nordic bit may well provide some consolation to fans of the Nordic Aryan stereotype who are unhappy with the theory that the Aryans came from a barbaric land outside Europe. Still, the fair hair and blue eyes, though probably present in this region in larger proportion than they are today, were by no means traits shared (let alone monopolized) by all the members of this population. Moreover, this population may not represent the purest original Aryans: it is perfectly possible (we shall see reasons for this suggestion in ch.2.11) that the Aryan heartland lay further to the east, and that the Panjab area was already a first area of colonization, bringing people of a new physical type into the Aryan speech community. While the Panjabi is physically very similar to the European, the Bihari is markedly less so, and yet it is possible that he represents more closely the ultimate Proto-Indo-European. The original Aryans were certainly darker than the average European, though just how much different he was from the "pure" Nordic racial type is

hard to find out. Not that it matters a lot.

The use of tentatively identifying the Aryan emigrants from India (all presupposing the Indian Urheimat theory, of course) with a physical type, viz. a robust variety of the Caucasoid race as still in evidence in the Panjab, is that it can help us in spotting their presence in an unexpected area. A migration between Panjab and Europe can hardly be traced through skeleton finds with the methods of physical anthropology now available (though the ongoing sophistication may open new possibilities in the near future) because the physical type remains fairly similar all along the way. However, in Inner Asia (even farther east than ex-Soviet Central Asia, where the Caucasoid type was attested since the Palaeolithic) the Caucasoid type stands out, and its temporary predominance in this area may be very significant.

Denis Sinor informs us: "As regards physical anthropology, though Mongoloid and Tungusid types may now be considered typically Inner Asian, the presence of Europoid populations in the very heartland of Inner Asia is well attested in the Neolithic period. A case in point is the Afanasievo culture which appeared about 2000 BC in the steppe island around Minusinsk. The people of the Andronovo culture which spread from the Altai to the Caspian Sea were also of Europoid race."[58] The Afanasievo culture practised elementary agriculture as well as horse-breeding, something which other sources (linguistic and cultural evidence) attest of the Proto-Indo-Europeans. Minusinsk lies on the upper Yenisei, where the Ket language is still spoken which arguably has some words in common with Germanic and Iranian.

In fact, both the skull findings and the Chinese literary sources indicate that in the early part of the first millennium BC, the Turko-Mongolian peoples did not live farther west than central Mongolia. What is now "Turkestan" was then inhabited by palaeo-Siberian, Uralic and Indo-European peoples, with a predominance of the Europoid race. According to Karl Jettmar, "groups which resemble the later Turks in their cultural expressions... were reported by the Chinese only in eastern Mongolia".[59] We refer to ch.2.6 for the archaeological and the Chinese literary indications for the continued presence of the Tokharic Indo-Europeans in Gansu since the 3rd millennium BC.

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[58] Denis Sinor: *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, Introduction, p.14.
[59] Karl Jettmar: *Geschichte Mittelasiens*, p.66.

However, Jettmar describes this demographic situation as an "overwhelming foreign intrusion" (*Überfremdung*) from the west, rather than as the original situation. Only in eastern Mongolia, "the [Mongoloid] ethnic substance remained unchallenged, as Mongoloid skulls show". If it was a massive intrusion from more westerly lands, this indicates a technical advantage of these western peoples, esp. in horse domestication. Horse domestication would then be an import into eastern Central Asia (as also indicated by its late adoption by the otherwise militarily shrewd Chinese), and this, in Jettmar's view, would lend support to the commonly accepted scenario that horse domestication took place in the Pontic-Caspian area and made possible an impressive expansion from that very area to east and west.

The archaeological and physical-anthropological evidence just given could perfectly support a scenario of Indian emigrants (mixed with indo-europeanized locals) in Central Asia, generally belonging to the Caucasoid racial type, domesticating the horse and moving westward to settle in South Russia, and later also eastward to settle in Gansu in about 2500 BC. On physical-anthropological grounds, their source land could be anywhere from Scandinavia to Panjab, but the latter is much more probable for common-sense reasons such as distance and the need for prosperous conditions to make the source-land demographically ebullient.

Physical anthropology combined with archaeology would also indicate a southward migration in about 2300 BC of the Kurgan people (then already occupying an area from the Alps to Central Asia), specifically well-attested in Palestine. Marija Gimbutas reports that in Jericho, a community described as belonging to the Cro-Magnon C type but fairly tall and dolichocephalic practised exactly the same type of burial as one branch of the Kurgan people. The point is that this set them apart from the surrounding communities, indicating their recent immigration: "The examination of skeletal material from Jericho has indicated that these people were distinctly different from the early Mediterranean and Near-Eastern populations..."[60] This finding says nothing about their language nor about the Kurgan language, but it is a strong indication of migration from the Kurgan area, and provides an illustration of how we might imagine the initial settlement of the Hittites in nearby Anatolia.

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[60] M. Gimbutas: "Proto-Indo-European Culture", p.189.

A very recent contribution of physical anthropology concerns the possible discontinuities in the racial composition in the population of the Harappan civilization. Close analysis of Harappan and "pre-Harappan" skulls has shown slight shifts in population (indicating immigration) in the period between 6000 and 4500 BC, and in the period between 800 and 200 BC.[61] So there was an immigration after all? Apparently yes, unless the discoverers mistake a statistically insignificant phenomenon for an important trend, and unless an ethnic group present earlier has fooled them by switching from clean cremation to relic-producing burial. But it was not the immigration of the Caucasoid race or some such large category, but merely of a discernible type within this larger category. The most important implication of this finding (not expressed by the original researchers) is that there was a perfect racial continuity between 4500 and 800 BC, i.e. the period in which a post- or even pre-Harappan Aryan Invasion would have to have taken place. Nobody claims a date later than 800 BC for this supposed invasion of a physically distinguishable ethnic group of Aryans, and all the dates that are being claimed do not tally with the just-mentioned racial continuity.

The proposed immigration wave of around 5000 BC will be linked with other evidence in the next chapter. In general, it may be repeated once more that the biological composition of India's population has known only very marginal changes since well before the dawn of the Harappan civilization, and that the surmised disappearance of some languages (or near-disappearance: Burushaski, Nahali) and the spectacular expansion of some others was less a matter of migration than one of cultural and linguistic assimilation.

2.8. The Dravidian invasion

In the last sub-chapter, we saw that physical anthropology has discovered indications of an immigration from West Asia to the Sindh area dated to roughly 5000 BC. Interestingly, the scholars involved opine that these earliest signs of immigration should be interpreted as evidence of a Dravidian immigration from West Asia. Those who complement the Aryan invasion with an earlier Dravid-

[61] Reported by Bhagwan Singh in the forthcoming updated English version of his *Harappa Sabhyata aur Vaidik Sahitya*, with reference to Brian E. Emphill, John R. Lukacs, K.A.R. Kennedy: 1991, p.173-174.

ian invasion usually put the latter beyond the early Harappan period, a hypothesis that could well be coupled with these new findings of physical anthropology. It is all just a hypothesis, but as it is favoured by a substantial section of the opinion-makers, we may take it up here for the sake of argument.

Alright, we let the Dravidians immigrate in about 5000 BC. Interestingly, this does not imply that there was an Aryan invasion. It is perfectly possible that most of North-India spoke Proto-Indo-European at that time. The scenario that follows from this double hypothesis goes as follows. When the Dravidians arrived, some of them settled in the densely populated, Proto-Indo-European-speaking Pre-Harappan area, assimilated linguistically and culturally, but added their own physical type to the population, as is evident from the minor "discontinuity" in the skull finds. Others stayed on the western periphery of the Harappan area, there to form the Brahui speech pocket, still in existence in spite of physical mingling and consequent loss of the distinctive physical type. Others yet moved on along the coast towards the south.

This scenario would imply that for some time, the coastal area of Gujarat and Maharashtra was predominantly Dravidian (whereas the Vidarbha area of Maharashtra, homeland of Lopamudra and Damayanti, was definitely Aryan). In the Indus-Saraswati-Narmada coastal area, the small Dravidian presence got drowned in the larger Indo-Aryan presence, but for some time they may have played an important role there. This tallies remarkably with the Brahminical expression "Pancha-Dravida", the southern half of the Brahmin caste, which indicates not only South India but Maharashtra and Gujarat as well.[62] Further, it is in consonance with the local tradition that a large part of the population of Maharashtra was originally Kannada-speaking.[63]

Until then, South India was thinly populated and undeveloped, so that even a small but fast-growing (because agricultural) immigrant group could substantially alter the physical and cultural composition of the population. And that, all within the hypothesis that links the claimed discontinuity in skull features with a migration

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[62] Mentioned in a different context by Srikant Talageri: *Aryan Invasion Theory and Indian Nationalism*, p.178.

[63] M. Deshpande (*op.cit.* p.281-282) mentions this linguistic conversion with reference to one Joshi: *Marhati Samskrti: Kahin Samasya* ("Marathi Culture: Some Problems"), with English subtitle: *A New Approach to the Dravidian Problem*, Pune 1952.

from West Asia, would explain how South India *became* Dravidian, and also why there are Dravidian-related speech pockets in Baluchistan (Brahui) and formerly in Iran (Elamite). It would also explain why there are fundamental similarities, suggesting kinship, between Uralic and Dravidian (possible common source-land around the Caspian sea), and not between Dravidian and its present-day northeastern neighbour Austric; and why there seems to be an early contact between Indo-European and Austronesian, rather than between the latter and Dravidian.

Regardless of whether physical anthropology testifies to an immigration from West Asia, there is another discipline, Elamo-Dravidian linguistics, which indicates the same scenario. Writes David McAlpin: "The modern distribution of Dravidian speakers points to some interesting conclusions. There is no evidence of an ancient penetration of Sri Lanka by Tamils. The fact that the Aryan Sinhalese were able to outflank them as the dominant group implies that any Tamil occupations were coastal and in small numbers. Given the ease of crossing the Palk Strait, this lack of Tamil occupation is very odd if the Tamils were aboriginal to South India. There is little to indicate that Dravidians were anciently in eastern India. The Kurux (and by implication the closely related Malto), according to their own traditions, have moved up the valley of the Narbada in historic times... If we take one of the standard family tree diagrams and superimpose it on a map of South Asia, several interesting relationships are brought to light... In general, odd groups and isolates (Brahui, Tulu, Kodaga) are in the west, closely related groups [indicating recentmost differentiation] in the east or south. The *Stammbaum* [= family tree] seems to point to Gujarat and on to Baluchistan. Thus, the pattern of distribution supports the concept of a fairly recent expansion of Dravidians into the Indian peninsula through Gujarat with possible forerunners... we must conclude that the Dravidians came from the west, are not aboriginal to the Indian peninsula (Deccan and South India), and in fact, must have entered it relatively late (second millennium BC) in prehistory."[64]

According to McAlpin, the Proto-Dravidians must have left Elam, then migrated to Baluchistan, then Sindh and Gujarat, where they must have played a part in the Harappan civilization (at least

[64] D. McAlpin: "Linguistic Prehistory: the Dravidian Situation", in Deshpande and Hook: *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, p.181-182.

in its southern reaches), and finally through Maharashtra to their present habitat. Like the Aryans, "they were almost certainly transhumants practising both herding and agriculture, with herding the more unbroken tradition" (McAlpin, not an expert on the Aryans, sees the Dravidian invasion as a parallel movement with the Aryan invasion). Their separation from the Elamites took place before the invention of writing (it is not that they brought the idea of writing from Elam to Sindh, though Elam may later have contributed the idea through cultural contact), and McAlpin offers 5000 BC as a reasonable guess for the date of the Elamo-Dravidian split. Given the Dravidians' assimilation of a pre-Dravidian population in South India (a common assumption yet to be verified esp. by demonstrating substratum elements), their comparatively peaceful history (esp. during the Muslim period when slaughter ravaged the Indo-Aryans), a back-calculation from present-day Dravidian population figures would indicate that the number of original Dravidian immigrants settled on the north-western coasts was quite small.

An additional linguistic argument has inadvertantly been given in Colin Masica's investigation of Dravidian etymologies in Hindi agricultural terminology: "The Dravidian element [in the vocabulary]... seems to decline from Sanskrit to Hindi. Though this is not documented here, I could not help noting while researching this paper that many a Dravidian word current in Sanskrit has left no living descendent in Hindi. Either one of its Aryan synonyms has alone survived, or its place is taken by a new Aryan coinage."[65] A first comment: this discovery is a formidable blow to the theory that a Dravidian population adopted the Aryan language from their rulers: in that case, the commoners' language would have had substantially more Dravidian words than the elitist Sanskrit, and not less, as turns out to be the case.

Secondly, Mr. Masica's surprise can be resolved if we keep in mind that the Prakritic dialect spoken in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, which is the ancestor of modern Hindi, was an easterly sister language of the Saraswati dialect which in its cultured form became Vedic Sanskrit. This implies that Hindi is not a daughter language of Sanskrit, and that differences in vocabulary do not indicate a loss and replacement of Sanskrit words, but possibly a continuation of the original situation, in which the Doab dialect had some words different from the Saraswati dialect. Now, the Saraswati dialect was

[65] Colin P. Masica: *op.cit.*, p.138.

in contact with the Dravidians moving along the Gujarat coast, but the Doab dialect was not, at least not directly. And that is why Sanskrit has borrowed more Dravidian words than Hindi has.

One objection that should be raised at this point, concerns the Dravidian influence on Iranian: if Vedic and proto-Iranian were really as close as has been assumed in ch.2.5, should not Iranian also show some Dravidian influence? If it was originally spoken in the Indus basin, should it not also be a neighbour of a Proto-Dravidian speech community? This, the lexical evidence in Iranian is indeed a crucial test for the entire Indian Urheimat theory, as well as for the Dravidian Invasion theory.

So far, I am not aware of a systematic lexical comparison of Iranian with Proto-Dravidian. However, in Franklin Southworth's study of borrowings between Dravidian and Sanskrit, we read: "The following item is perhaps the most significant of those which I present here: *tanū-* 'body, person, self' (Rg-Veda), also used as a reflexive pronoun; — Tamil *taaN/tāN*, 'oneself'... The word is deeply imbedded in the structure of Dravidian, being found in almost all the languages... On the Indo-Aryan side, the word appears in the Rg-Veda; and there is, moreover, an Avestan *tanuu* with the same meanings, also used as a reflexive, as well as an Old Persian *tanuush*, 'body, self'... [This] example strongly suggests a much earlier period of contact... it seems most probable that this word was borrowed from Dravidian (or possibly Proto-Elamo-Dravidian) into Indo-Iranian, before the break-up of this group into [Indo-Aryan] and Iranian. (Admitting the possibility that the borrowing went the other way, from Indo-Iranian into Dravidian, would put the period of contact even even farther back, according to current estimates.) It is conceivable, but unlikely, that there was continuous contact between Indo-Aryans and Dravidians from the Indo-Iranian period up to the time of the composition of the Rg-Veda..."[66]

So far, so good: there was an early contact, when Dravidian and Indo-Iranian were compact speech communities. However, the lexical evidence does not go much farther: "Since the other words presented in [the list of 18 words borrowed by Sanskrit from Dravidian, and 10 common words with uncertain direction of borrowing] do not have known Iranian cognates, it can be presumed

[66] F. Southworth: *op.cit.*, p.198, p.203.

that most of them entered Old Indo-Aryan after the break-up of Indo-Iranian... This contact presumbly involved both Dravidian and Indo-Aryan speakers at a time when they were still fairly compact, undivided groups."[67]

This might be a problem for the Indian Urheimat theory, although the evidence of the word *tanū* gives it a boost. The fact that otherwise, Iranian does not seem to participate in this exchange of words, can only be explained if Iranian was not in contact with Dravidian, at a time when Sanskrit was. What might have happened is that Dravidian at this point was spoken on the southeast side of the Saraswati area where Vedic culture flourished, i.e. Gujarat, and Iranian on its northwest frontier, i.e. Panjab. This would imply that Brahui, which bordered on the Panjab from the west, was an isolated language which hardly took part in this process; and Southworth does indeed find a "relative paucity of North-Dravidian cognates in these comparisons".[68]

Only those words which are attested in the entire Dravidian family (including North-Dravidian) and in Sanskrit but not in Iranian pose a problem, and they are only few. The others, borrowed from South-Dravidian into Sanskrit but not in Iranian, are a normal phenomenon if Iranian did not border on South-Dravidian (just like the Flemish dialects of Dutch used to borrow many French words for which Dutch proper has coined its own terms). Even of the pan-Dravidian words borrowed by Sanskrit but not by Iranian, one should subtract those pertaining to Indian flora and fauna, which Iranian would have lost upon moving to Iran. So, all in all, the lexical evidence of Iranian as compared with Sanskrit and Dravidian cannot be said to plead strongly against the Indian Urheimat theory; but the final word about this has not been said, esp. because the present beliefs have not encouraged this line of investigation.

If David McAlpin's views on a Dravidian immigration are accepted, and if the Indian theory of an Indian Urheimat of Indo-European is also accepted, the emerging picture may be utterly weird when looked at from the presently prevalent opinion: in India in 5000 BC, you had Proto-Indo-European, Austronesian and Austric, but no Dravidian, which was only starting on its way from West Asia, where the agricultural Neolithic Revolution had just

[67] *ibid.*, p.203.
[68] *ibid.*, p.230.

caused a demographic surplus. The Austronesians were partly absorbed and partly pushed out by the Dravidians, or were already emigrating anyway, and they went on to populate the island world to the south-east, possibly assimilating or replacing Papua and Australian populations in some places. All this time, the Proto-Indo-Europeans were developing their language and culture in Aryavarta, and sending out adventurers and trading-colonies and ultimately large emigrant populations towards the west. While the Dravidians were coming in along the coast, the Indo-Europeans were moving out along the mountain passes to their Far West, the steppelands with their population of horses, the vehicle for further expansion into Europe.

It need hardly be repeated that the Dravidian Invasion theory is not at all dependent on our experimental Indian Urheimat theory for Indo-European. Most believers in the Aryan Invasion theory now reject the Indian Urheimat theory for Dravidian, which is still popular among Dravidianist politicians. Thus, A.L. Basham wrote in 1979 already: "Arguments in favour of the South Indian peninsula being the original home of the Dravidian language family, very popular with Tamil scholars at one time, cannot resist the weight of the evidence, both archaeological and linguistic."[69]

For Dravidianists who have been making their political careers on hate-mongering against the "Aryan invaders" (identified with Hindi and Sanskrit, with the Brahmins, with Congress and the BJP, and with the Indian state), the emerging picture may be hard to swallow. They are sure to remark that the linguistic arguments offered by David McAlpin are attractive, but that after rejecting an Aryan Invasion theory which had seduced so many, we should be prepared to doubt the Dravidian invasion theory as well. We are prepared, but even so, the burden of proof has shifted to the Dravidianists: if they continue to consider "invader" a term of abuse, as they do when they hurl it at "Aryan invaders", it is now up to them to prove that they themselves are not invaders.

2.9. Archaeology

Much use is now being made of archaeological findings, which give datable evidence of material culture and of migrations (either of people or of their material culture). Naturally, archaeological

[69] A.L. Basham: introduction to Deshpande and Hook: *op.cit.*, p.2.

evidence of the demographic and cultural movements in Europe during the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods does not contain a single piece of information about the language spoken. Literary evidence does not reach back far enough. Yet, the combination of archaeology with information from the fields of linguistics and anthropology is providing more and more building blocks for a reasonable reconstruction of early Indo-European history.

Archaeology by itself is capable of dating phenomena of material culture accurately, e.g. the dates of city habitation and of the use of horses. Findings tested with the calibrated C-14 method show that "the Harappan culture should be dated to the period of 2700-2000 BC with a terminal date not lower than 1900 BC", a date suggestively close to the drying of the Saraswati.

Similarly, archaeology is relied upon to assume an Indo-European presence in West Asia centuries before the literary testimonies of the Hittite and Mitannic presence: "There are a number of cultural-historical and archaeological data which prove the presence of ethnic Indo-Europeans in the ancient Near East earlier than the Indo-Aryans, e.g. the remains of domesticated horses in Central and East Anatolia..., dating from the end of the 4th millennium BC and connected with an Indo-European ethnic group."[70] The Hittites are merely the survivors of this wave, while other groups got assimilated to their non-Indo-European environment.

The impression that an archaeological reconstruction of the Indo-European dispersal from South Russia has actually succeeded, has been conveyed by popular literature as also by many non-archaeologist Indo-europeanists, esp. with reference to Marija Gimbutas' work. She claims that waves of heavily armed pastoralist horsemen left the area of the Kurgan culture in successive waves in 4500-2800, and imposed their patriarchal and hierarchical social structure and sky-god religion on the agricultural, earth-goddess-worshipping, art-loving, matriarchal and egalitarian civilization of Old Europe and (largely by analogy:) Harappa. It may be a disappointment for romantics and feminists that this theory is not taken seriously by many experts, with reasons that cannot be reduced to political compulsions or "male chauvinist prejudice".

[70] T.V. Gamkrelidze and V.V. Ivanov: "The Problem of the Original Homeland of the Speakers of Indo-European Languages", in *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1985/1-2, p.175-184, spec. p.179. They use these findings in support of a West-Asian Urheimat.

Stefan Zimmer notes: "This surprisingly detail-happy presentation has often been criticized and can now count as outdated."[71] J.P. Mallory writes: "Almost all of the arguments for invasion and cultural transformations are far better explained without reference to Kurgan expansions, and most of the evidence so far presented is either totally contradicted by other evidence or is the result of gross misinterpretation of the cultural history of Eastern, Central and Northern Europe."[72]

The name itself of the Kurgan culture indicates that, while they may have been one culturally promiscuous branch of the Indo-European family, they were certainly not the Indo-Europeans nor even a typical sample. The earliest known Indo-European nations usually cremated their dead (much to the regret of contemporary archaeo-anthropologists), but the eponymous artefact of the Kurgan culture is, of all things, a burial method, and a very elaborate one too: a room with utensils for the deceased one, covered with an artificial hill made specially for him. This reminds us of the Egyptian kings' graves, but not of Vedic or Harappan or Iranian or ancient Greek cultures. This is not to say that the Kurgan culture was not Indo-European; merely that the Kurgan burial method cannot be used as proof for this otherwise plausible thesis.

Consider the oft-used argument of the archaeologically attested high mobility of the Kurgan people as "splendidly agreeing" with the linguistic evidence. Marija Gimbutas writes: "Mobility is unquestionably a Proto-Indo-European characteristic. Horse-riding was the prime means of Indo-European mobility." Follows a list of Proto-Indo-European words for wheel, chariot, yoke, axis etc., attesting an early familiarity with vehicles, which (more than the evidence of trees and animals in the lexicon) is a justifiable exercise in linguistic paleontology:if they had a name for artefacts, they must have known the artefacts too. It follows that "...the Proto-Indo-Europeans must have been acquainted with wheeled wagons from Kurgan I times. So far, the earliest evidence for the existence of wheels is miniature clay models of wheels found in Old European settlements dating from ca. 4500-4200 BC from the period of the first Kurgan extension into East Central Europe. No parts of actual vehicles of this period have ever been found."[73]

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[71] S. Zimmer: *op.cit.*, p.9.

[72] J.P. Mallory: *In Search of the Indo-Europeans*, p.185.

[73] M. Gimbutas: "Primary and Secondary Homeland of the Indo-Europeans", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, p.185-202, spec. p.199.

Remark that this oldest and indirect (toy) evidence dates to after the break-up of the original Proto-Indo-European unity even if this is identified with the Kurgan culture, while Mrs. Gimbutas' point is precisely that vehicles were part of the common Proto-Indo-European heritage (in this context, she intends to show that the Kurgan culture is the ancestor of all Indo-European branches, not just of the European ones as is implied in the West-Asian Urheimat theory — and also in the Indian Urheimat theory). She correctly refuses to draw the conclusion that vehicles were only known as late as the date of the earliest evidence, i.e. she rejects the *argumentum e silentio* that things only existed if, when and where they have left us some testimony. The same argument has been used to rejct the existence of spoke-wheeled vehicles in Harappa, and there it should equally be rejected.

However, the plausible assumption, based on linguistic paleontology and on incomplete archaeological data, that the Kurgan people and the Proto-Indo-Europeans had vehicles, does not imply that the two can be equated: "Here is the radical error: with the methods of linguistic paleontology anything may be proved as Proto-Indo-European, but it can *not* be proved as *typically* Proto-Indo-European... The Indo-Europeans knew vehicles, since they knew words (roots) for drive, and for the vehicle and its wheels, for axle, nave, pole, yoke, etc. But did, for example, the Protto-Semites not know any vehicle? Oh, yes!, they did — we can reconstruct the Proto-Semitic roots for 'drive' and 'yoke' at least. The Sumerians also knew vehicles, as did the Proto-Finno-Ugrians. The case of the hill-forts... is not different from that: 'Hill-forts with royal houses and living quarters for the ruling class are an Indo-European characteristic' (Gimbutas) — but they also appear in non-Indo-European cultures of the Near East... [I agree with] Ward H. Goodenough, who thinks 'that the Kurgan I people were not THE Proto-Indo-Europeans, but a subgroup among them'."[74] The temptation to eagerly read confirmation of our theories into the archaeological material, has been too strong for many researchers, and this observation itself gives new breathing-space to those who challenge the established beliefs for which "archaeological evidence" is claimed.

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[74] Rudiger Schmitt: "Proto-Indo-European Culture and Archaeology: Some Critical Remarks", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1974/3, p.279-287, spec. p.283-284. Emphases in the original.

While the archaeology-based Kurgan expansion theory may be imperfect as an explanation of the Indo-europeanization of Europe, its contribution to a reconstruction of the supposed Indo-europeanization of North India is virtually non-existent. This is partly due to the fact that the archaeological exploration of what is now Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan has only begun in recent years. What has been found so far has not been *demonstrated* by anyone to yield the traces of an itinerary of the eastward-migrating Indo-Aryans.[75] Jean Haudry reports: "Since the late 3rd millennium BC, an undecorated black pottery appears in Tepe Hissar (Turkmenistan), together with violin-shaped female idols and esp. with bronze weapons, the horse and the war chariots, and — a detail of which R. Ghirshman has demonstrated the importance — the clarion, indispensible instrument for collective chariot maneuvers. We can follow them from a distance on their way to the south."[76] To the south, not to the east. Rather than Indo-Iranians on their way from South Russia to Iran and partly to India, these may as well be the Hittites, Kassites or Mitanni, on their way from India, via the Aral Lake area, to Anatolia, Mesopotamia or Anatolia, where they show up in subsequent centuries.

On the other hand, migrations from Iran northward are also attested. Against the theory of a southward migration of the Iranians from the Aral-Caspian area into Iran, P. Bosch-Gimpera proposes that the Iranians came from South Russia via the Caucasus into Iran and thence to what is now Turkestan: "The acknowledged penetration of the Iranians into Turkestan, where they arrived as far as Khorezm... must have taken place, on the contrary, from Iran itself, around 1000 BC."[77] It is just one more theory on the unresolved problem of the Iranian migration: it is so difficult because the Medes surface in the westernmost part of Iran in the early first millennium, centuries after Zoroaster wrote in the easternmost part. It is therefore perfectly logical to let them come from the east, say from Afghanistan in about 1700 to Media and Khorezm (as mentioned by Bosch-Gimpera) in about 1000.

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[75] An attempt by Asko Parpola to give archeaological proof of this itinerary has, in my opinion, been refuted convincingly by K.D. Sethna: *The Problem of Aryan Origins*, supplement 5, with reference to Parpola: "The coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the cultural and ethnic identity of the Dasas", in *Studia Orientalia*, vol.64 (Helsinki 1988), p.195-265.

[76] J. Haudry: *op.cit.*, p.118, with reference to R. Ghirshman: *L'Iran et les Migrations des Indo-Aryans et des Iraniens* (1977).

[77] P. Bosch-Gimpera: "The Migration Route of the Indo-Aryans", p.515.

The archaeological argument for an Aryan invasion is usually based on circular reasoning. Thus, Romila Thapar writes: "In Haryana and the western Ganga plain, there was an earlier Ochre Colour Pottery going back to about 1500 BC or some elements of the Chalcolithic cultures using Black-and-Red Ware. Later in about 800 BC there evolved the Painted Grey Ware culture. The geographical focus of this culture seems to be the Doab, although the pottery is widely distributed across northern Rajasthan, Panjab, Haryana and western U.P. None of these post-Harappan cultures, identifiable by their pottery, are found beyond the Indus. Yet this would be expected if 'the Aryans' were a people indigenous to India with some diffusion to Iran, and if the attempt was to find archaeological correlates for the affinities between Old Indo-Aryan and Old Avestan."[78]

Firstly, according to the prevalent account of the Aryan Invasion, the period around 800 BC saw an Aryan expansion into Bihar and Bengal, which is not correlated with a spread of pottery according to Prof. Thapar's own data; perhaps contact and migration is not always traceable through pottery?

Secondly, if no common pottery type is found in Iran and India in 1500-800 BC, and if this counts as proof that no migration from India to Iran took place, then it also proves that no migration from Iran to India took place.

Thirdly and most importantly, if the absence of migration in the period from 1500 BC onwards is really proven, then this only disproves the Aryan migration if one stays with the assumption that the Aryan migration, be it into or out of India, took place around 1500 BC; but that assumption is precisely part of the Aryan Invasion theory which Ms. Thapar has set out to prove. The circularity of her argument lies in the fact that a part of one theory (i.c. the date of the migration) is still assumed even while evaluating a rival theory which rejects this part. The archaeological data which she mentions, assuming they can prove the absence of migrations in 1500 BC and later, are not at all in conflict with the theory that Indo-Europeans from India emigrated between 4000 and 2000 BC and that the Iranians were the last emigrants in around 2000 BC.

For the numerous archaeological indications of a Vedic or Avestan Aryan presence in the Harappan cities, I refer to S.R. Rao's and Bhagwan Singh's pioneering work. Suffice it to repeat that

[78] R. Thapar: *op.cit.*

Aryan fire-altars and a Vedic-like absence of whole-time temple buildings strongly indicate an Aryan-Harappan kinship. What is more, the fact that no temples are attested, is a common trait of Harappa and that other acclaimed centre of Aryanism, the Kurgan culture, where "no real sanctuaries have ever been found; they probably had open sanctuaries".[79] Other new insights based on archaeology and detrimental to the stereotypical Harappan/Aryan opposition, is that the Harappans did have weapons and fortifications, "just like" the Aryans.[80]

In spite of the impression created in popular literature, archaeology has by no means demonstrated that there was an Aryan immigration into India. Even the new levels in accuracy do not affect the following *status quaestionis* of the Aryan Invasion theory: "The question of Indo-European migrations into the subcontinent of India can, at best, be described as enigmatic.".[81] Thus, among those who assume the Aryan Invasion, there is no consensus on when it took place, and some archaeologists alter the chronology so much that the theory comes to mean the opposite of what it is usually believed to mean, viz. an affirmation of Aryan dominance in Harappa rather than an Aryan destruction of Harappa: "[This] episode of elite dominance which brought the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European family to India... may have been as early as the *floruit* of the Indus civilization..."[82] This lack of consensus by itself already indicates that the prevalent versions of the Aryan Invasion theory are on shaky ground.

Archaeology has so far not demonstrated the opposite migration either, but then, very few archaeologists have even tried to interpret their data this way. Perhaps a simple round of armchair theorizing over already-available data will provide the archaeological support for an Indian Urheimat theory.

2.10. Comparative religion

What clues do the extant testimonies of ancient cultural traditions have to offer on the Indo-European Urheimat question?

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[79] M. Gimbutas: "Proto-Indo-European Culture", p.191.

[80] This is one of the points elaborated by Shereen Ratnagar: *Enquiries into the Political Organization of Harappan Society*.

[81] David G. Zanotti: "Another Aspect of the Indo-European Question: a Response to P. Bosch-Gimpera", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1975/3, p.255-270, spec. p.260.

[82] C. Renfrew: "Before Babel: Speculations on the Origins of Linguistic Diversity", *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 1 (1),p.3-23, spec. p.14.

The importance and limitations of this approach can be illustrated with a common contention made in the Indian chapter of the Indo-European debate. It is sometimes claimed that the Central-Asian origin of the Vedic culture is proved by the importance and the iconography of the sun-god Surya. Surya is depicted riding a chariot, and dressed like a steppe-hunter, alone among the Hindu gods in wearing shoes. Not only does the climate in Inner Asia make it difficult to walk barefoot, as is common in India, but the same motif of a solar chariot is common among the ancient Turko-Mongolian peoples. Add to this the cult of heaven, personified by the Mongols as *Tengri*, worshipped by the Chinese Zhou dynasty in either personified (the god *Tian*, "heaven") or impersonal form, and also worshipped by the Indo-Europeans as the god Heaven-Father (*Dyaus Pitar*, Zeus, Jupiter). It is tempting to conclude that the Indo-Europeans originated in an area bordering on Turko-Mongol territory, and therefore shared a common worship of a solar or heaven god.

Prof. Okladnikov informs us: "The steppe nomads of Inner Asia also created their own spiritual world. In religion this was a rich dualistic mythology based on the heavenly gods of light and the evil gods of the underworld. Heaven was honoured as the highest divinity... The nomads of Inner Asia also created and took to different countries the elements of a spiritual culture, including the peripatetic subjects of folklore and myths. On the cliffs of the Altai and the Gobi-Altai in Mongolia the figures of sun chariots have been preserved. The same sun chariots are to be found in Kirghizia, in Scandinavia, and in Italy. One such chariot at Dyalangash in the Altai is drawn not by horses or oxen, but by goats, a picture reminiscent of the chariot of [the Germanic god] Donar/Thor and his goats."[83]

The bold conclusion from this epigraphic evidence would be that the Germanic or other Indo-European tribes roamed in the Altai region for some time, and that it is they who left us these sun-chariot carvings and shared some of their religious imagery with the Turko-Mongol peoples. If we shy away from it, then we are still left with a common religious theme in two cultures, and with the question whether this demonstrates borrowing or parallel invention. In India, sun-worship was relatively marginal and has ef-

[83] A.P. Okladnikov: "Inner Asia at the Dawn of History", in *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, p.95-95.

fectively been associated with Central Asia (*Shakadweep*), whence different immigrant communities in the historical period brought their own variety of the Surya cult, e.g. the Maga Brahmins coming from western Afghanistan, and settled in Punjab and Rajasthan. Every Pagan religion must have had its bit of sun-worship, but it was certainly more central (or at least more explicit) to the Central-Asian cultures than to mature Hindu culture. Significantly, the newly independent republics of Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan, where islamization has been less thorough than in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, have adopted the sun rather than the crescent in their national flags, as a tribute to their ancestral tradition. So: do we accept that the Indo-Europeans adopted the sun cult fom their Altaic neighbours before invading India?

The case for borrowing is rather thin: worshipping heaven is a fairly obvious thing to do, and does not require contact and cultural exchange. Mesopotamians worshipped the starry sky, and references to "heaven" are common in religious parlance of many diverse nations. While sun and heaven cults are not very specific nor hard to invent, they are distinctly different motifs from, say, the bear cult of the Uralic peoples, the mother goddess cult, or ancestor worship; but that still does not make borrowing necessary, nor does it decide on the direction of borrowing. Imagining the sun's daily journey through the sky as a chariot journey is also rather obvious, at least to people who already know the use of chariots — and here the Indo-Europeans have an edge over the Turko-Mongols.

As for Surya's shoes: the references to cold lands, including the Avestan description of the Iranian source-country Airyanam Vaejo, may refer to India's Himalayan borderlands, esp. to Kashmir, rather than to Siberia. But if these shoes are as significant as has been claimed, they may certainly point to borrowing of this specific god and his iconography from Central Asia, but not to an Aryan immigration from that area or from any cold area: if the shoes had been a pointer to the general Aryan homeland, they would of course have been a common feature of all the Aryan gods. The fact that Surya stands alone with this iconographic feature, if at all geographically significant, indicates that Surya's personal history and provenance is different from that of the other gods. This is confirmed when we look more closely into the history of this iconography. A.G. Mitchell writes: "According to the descriptions *in later*

(i.e. non-Vedic) texts, reference is often made to his appearance as being 'in northern garb', and this may account for his being shown in north Indian images as wearing long boots reaching to his knees. In south Indian images, however, he is usually shown barefooted."[83a]

If at all an earlier process of borrowing is considered necessary to explain the resemblance between features of Aryan and of Central-Asian culture, it could be situated in the period of initial northward expansion of Indo-European tribes from India. The direction of borrowing could be either way: the culturally advanced Indo-Europeans may have passed on their religious notions, but they may also have borrowed from their new trading-partners and passed on some religious lore to their homeland when they were still in contact with it.

While the sun-worship theme seems in itself not strong enough to establish an Aryan-Altaic relationship, other cultural themes may reinforce our first impression. One remarkable contribution to this line of research is Peter Edwin Hook's comparison of the motif of "the heroine's marriage" in famous love stories from West, Central, South and Southeast Asia (Savitri and Satyavan, Layla and Majnun, etc.). It turns out that the Central- and South-Asian legends have a pattern in common which is markedly different from the usual pattern in the other two traditions: "In the Perso-Arabic tradition their marriage usually does not occur. In the Southeast Asian examples I have examined, a marriage usually occurs but the heroine for one reason or another is not able to maintain her fidelity to the hero throughout. In Central Asian literature, and certainly in South Asian literature, there is both a marriage and purely monogamous behaviour on the part of the heroine until the end of the story."[84]

In this context, Hook lists other cultural motifs in common between South and Central Asia: "indications of an ancient pan-Siberian cult to the mother goddess Umay", the "recognition and worship of the *swayambhu* (the *seite* or 'found' idol) by the Lapps", and "startling resemblances in the iconographies of Lord Shiva and Erlik Khan, ruler of the Turkic underworld"; specifically with South India, the common symbolic "connection of woman's breast and

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[83a] A.G. Mitchell: Hindu Gods and Goddesses, plate 1. Emphasis added.

[84] P.E. Hook: "The Marriage of Heroines and the Definition of a Literary Area in South and Central Asia", in Deshpande and Hook: ***Aryan and Non-Aryan in India***, p.35-54, specifically p.48.

fire", "the survival of shamanistic practices", and the resemblance between the Siberian practice of "building little houses around and offering food and drink to the gravestones of the ancestors" with the "practices surrounding the *natukal* of ancient Tamilnadu". We would add the horse cult, well-attested among Altaic and most Indo-European peoples, including the Vedic people, who identified the horse with the sun and used it as a divine guide in the empire-building exercise known as the "horse sacrifice".[85] Hook himself admits at once that "many of these features are of too pervasive an occurrence among archaic peoples all over the world to be sufficient in themselves for the demonstration of prehistoric contacts or affinities among the peoples of ancient South and Central Asia".[86]

The great limitation of these comparative studies of customs and mythical motifs is indeed that they can originate in a parallel development rather than in contact or a common source. Thus, shamanistic practices are not universal (they are emphatically not present in the Vedic religion), but their simultaneous occurrence in Siberia and Tamil Nadu may well result from independent developments. The resemblance between the names of the Siberian goddess Umay and the Hindu goddess Uma may be pure coincidence. The "startling resemblance" between Shiva and Erlik Khan may be more indicative of cultural exchange, but is of course not sufficient by itself.

Putting the above information together, we would certainly be inclined to assume a more intense contact between the Altaic area and India, than between India and its eastern and western neighbours. But then, we have hardly looked into the relation with West Asia, which may turn out to be equally significant. Thus, West-Asian myths and legends seem to know of India (at least of *Aratta*, i.e. Panjab) and to have exchanged some themes, such as the Flood. Since much of agricultural knowledge as well as the idea of writing seem to have been imported into India from West Asia, a profound cultural influence is only what we would expect. Whether it has effectively materialized, we leave for another occasion to investigate.

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[85] Anthony, Telegin and Brown: *op.cit.* Describing the cult stallion found in the Kurgan site Dereivka, they report: "The ritual custom in which a horsehide with the head and feet attached is displayed on a pole to mark a sacred location is widely documented in pre-Christian Europe. The rite was conducted well into this century among the Buryat and Oirot peoples..."

[86] *ibid.*, p.49-50.

Much more than in the reconstruction of the interactions between proto-languages, in the reconstruction of cultural influences we have to take unpredictable factors into account, such as the totally disproportionate role which gifted individuals can play in the spread of a specific motif (like the plot of a love story) to one country rather than to its neighbour. Less specific motifs, by contrast, are just too omnipresent to yield many compelling indications.

Thus, to support the claim that Anatolian myths are splendidly Indo-European and therefore indicate Anatolia as the Urheimat, the following motifs are summed up: "the mythological motif of the initial unity of man and earth, the motif of god as shepherd of the souls, the mythological motif of the bull and the lion, the mythological motif of stolen apples and others." Against this, it is pointed out: "All of these can be found in quite different countries...: the creation of man from clay is known everywhere from the African Yoruba people to China. The bull cult (and even the horse cult) was already known to Cro-Magnon man; the lion cult existed everywhere where lions lived; and where they did not, the cult of the jaguar or the tiger was to be found. Even the Greek motif of Orpheus and Eurydice was known to the Japanese and to American Indians; the same goes for the motifs of god-shepherd of souls, and so on."[87]

So, while the comparative exploration of myths, rituals and customs will certainly have some value, only very persistent patterns of similarity should be accepted as indications of contact. We will for now limit ourselves to those aspects of this line of research which are the least speculative. Rather than trying to establish early links between Indo-European and other cultures, let us see if we can find common motifs in a group of cultures of which we know beforehand that they have a profound link: the different branches of the Indo-European speech community itself.

After 1945, the attempt to reconstruct the culture of the Indo-Europeans became a bit of a taboo subject, because it had a tinge of glorification of a Golden Age of the pure Aryan race. But now it is allowed again: after all, to have a common language, people must be communicating with each other, and in doing so, they would develop a common culture. In much of this sub-chapter, we

[87] I.M. Diakonov: *op.cit.*, p.138.

will follow J. Haudry's reconstruction of Indo-European culture and religion. Admittedly, he is the one scholar who is eminently vulnerable to the suspicion of neo-Aryanist motives, given his known right-wing sympathies. But he is useful for our purpose precisely because he takes the Euro-chauvinist position that the original Indo-Europeans were blond Nordics subduing the darker natives of southern Europe and South Asia: he cannot be suspected of a bias towards the Indian Urheimat theory.[88]

On the basis of the common heritage attested among the historical Indo-European nations, the original Indo-European religion was characterized as follows:

1. It is a polytheist religion uniting a plurality of cults practised by groups and tribes.
2. Instead of proselytizing, every group jealously guards his own gods, rites and formulas.
3. The religion is not based on belief and sentiment but on a ritual and ethical code of action.
4. A public religion closely linked with social and political life; with no respect for individual magic and a distinct aversion for witchcraft (which therefore must also have existed).
5. The exact nature of the gods as persons or abstract forces, as nearby or unapproachable, changes with time and place. They may be named after natural phenomena (dawn, fire, heaven), celestial bodies, or abstract social phenomena (contract, pledge); are called "master of" a given phenomenon (master of the forest, master of expansiveness), or a family relation (daughter of the sun); or are addressed with epithets (resistance-breaker).
6. There are two opposite notions of the sacred: positively, what is charged with divine power (Latin *sanctus*, Greek *hieros*); negatively, what is forbidden to man (Latin *sacer*, Greek *hagios*). Whence a double attitude to the gods: friendly confidence but also respectful distance (e.g. among the Vedic gods, Indra is your comrade-at-arms, but Varuṇa is the stern guardian of oaths). According to Haudry, "the Indo-European religion has strict prohibitions but it is a religion of free people".

The Indo-European system of gods contains, in broad outline, the following categories:

[88] J. Haudry: *Les Indo-Europeens*, p.72 ff.

1. *Gods of nature.* These are in the first place the goddess of earth and the god of heaven, associated also with night and day, black and white, and appearing together with the goddess of dawn, who is red. At a more abstract level, these three colours form a fundamental set of symbols in Indo-European cosmology, best preserved in the Hindu system of *triguna*: the white transparent *sattva*, the red energetic *rajas*, and the black inert *tamas*. Other gods of nature signify the elements: fire god, water goddess, wind gods (usually of minor status). A very popular and ancient god, but less prominent in the official cult, was the sun-god. It is only of these nature-gods that common Indo-European names are attested (e.g. Germanic *Tiwaz*, Greek *Zeus*, Sanskrit *Dyaus-pitar*, Latin *Jupiter*, Sanskri *Surya*, Greek *Helios*). Male gods normally have a female consort or counterpart.

2. *Social unit gods.* These are the gods of the "four circles", four levels of social belonging: family, clan, tribe, nation. The head of each circle is the officiating priest of its cult. For the family cult, the officiant has no other assistant except his wife (who changes cult upon getting married), but for public cults, a class of experts came into existence, who were originally nothing but assistants to the chieftain. Some Indo-European branches constructed temples while others, e.g. the Germans, ignored or rejected this practice. The cults of the inner circles were essentially ancestor cults, often with a real god claimed as the ultimate ancestor. The public cult was essentially directed to what Georges Dumezil has called the gods of the "three functions".

3. *Gods of the three functions.* These are divine personifications and guardians of the three functions in society: sovereignty (decision-making, public order), defence, and production. The first function has two aspects: juridical (contract) represented by Vedic Mitra, Germanic Tiwaz/Tyr; and religio-magical (oath, word of power), represented by Vedic Varuna, Germanic Wodan/Odin; the Roman pantheon has Jupiter to represent the first function as a whole. The second function is that of warfare: Vedic Indra, Germanic Donar/Thor, Roman Mars. The third function is that of fertility and production: it is represented by the Vedic god-couple the Ashvins or Nasatyas, the Germanic Freyr (male counterpart of Freya, goddess of love and fertility), the Roman Quirinus (name meaning "master of the assembly, the multitude"). In the reformed Iranian theology of Zarathustra, a revival of this structure of the

gods system in a different form has been discerned. The six abstract aspects of Ahura Mazda become personified as the "Holy Immortals", and George Dumezil has shown how they reproduce the trifunctionality scheme: Good Thought corresponds to Mitra, Truth to Varuna, Empire to Indra, Integrity and Immortality to the Nasatya couple, and Right Thought to the goddess accompanying the gods.

Some remarks on the pantheon of the different Indo-European peoples are in order. Firstly, Dumezil's trifunctionality scheme is a bit artificial in the case of Zarathustra's Holy Immortals, and it does not seem to be attested as a consciously triadic system in the Greek religion, though of course individual gods can be associated with the three functions (as the gods of any non-Indo-European pantheon could). The trifunctionality scheme has its strong points, but should not be exaggerated.

This should especially be kept in mind when we see its correspondence with the layers of society. While some societies, like the Celtic and Iranian as described in some sources, nicely fit this scheme, others do not: Germanic society had generally no separate class charged with the first function, and a lot has been written on whether Indo-Aryan society originally had three or four classes (see ch.5.4). It is however interesting to note that the third function (fertility, production) is sometimes represented by a god-couple, corresponding to the double social class involved in production: the Vaishyas and the Shudras. This may be just coincidence; at any rate, we can safely abandon the Marxist position that the trifunctionality scheme in religion is merely a projection of the class division of society.

Secondly, there is a recurring theme of two classes of major gods: Vedic Devas and Asuras, Germanic Aesir and Vanir, Greek Gods and Titans. The fact that these two classes sometimes end up becoming enemies (Gods led by Zeus throwing Titans led by Kronos into the Tartaros underworld, Ahura upheld against Daeva demons, late-Vedic struggle of Devas and Asuras, *Dev-asura-samgram*) has been used by Aryan-baiters to prove that the Aryans have waged war against earlier nations represented by the second class of gods. In fact, a pantheon reflective of natural realities should also reflect conflict and competition. To take the most obvious theatre of gods at play, viz. the starry sky, there is a whole range of phenomena that can be imagined as a struggle: sun or

moon being devoured in an eclipse; Venus, Jupiter and the fixed star Sirius competing for the greatest brightness; the fast planets overtaking the slower ones; the sun chasing away the stars at dawn; planets in opposition rising while the other one sets and vice versa; clouds obscuring the sky and lightning breaking open the clouds as water-holding fortresses; and most of all, the daily struggle between the night and the daylight. Regardless of the ethnic conflicts of their worshippers, the gods of the universe should have episodes of conflict in their own history.

On the other hand, there may be traditions modelled on the war of the gods but referring to historical events. These are what Haudry calls the "foundation wars", in which a small group of superior skill and prowess defeats a larger group. The theme of quality defeating quantity is represented in the Mahabharata by Krishna lending his numerous army to the Kauravas and his own unarmed self to the Pandavas, who obtain victory. In Germanic mythology, it is the storming Aesir who defeat the Vanir, the gods of plenty; this way, the theme could be understood as the victory of the second over the third function, of warriors over producers, and some will add: of nomadic Aryan invaders over sedentary pre-Aryan cultivators. This would indeed be a plausible interpretation of the Roman legend of the war between Romans and Sabines: the Romans abduct the Sabine girls, are attacked by the Sabines, defeat them, and merge with them to live happily ever after as a single and bigger nation.

While not accepting that the gods' war is merely a projection of a specific human ethnic war, we may accept that a legend developed around a historical war (between Indo-Europeans and others or between different Indo-European tribes) may have been re-cast into the known mould of the gods' war. It is of course significant that the Roman-Sabine war took place among a European and not an Indian branch of the Indo-Europeans: if there was an assimilation of pre-Indo-European nations in Europe, it is but logical that these have left some traces in the extant literature.

The two classes of gods cut across the trifunctionality division: Wodan/Odin and Donar/Thor, representatives of first and second function, both belong to the Aesir class of gods, while Freyr, third function, belongs to the Vanir; Varuna, representing the first function, belongs to the Asuras, while Indra, second function, belongs to the Devas (whereas their two Germanic counterparts belong to one and the same class).

Thirdly, when we consider the names and attributes of the gods, we see that changes have taken place over the centuries: lightning-wielding Indra corresponds to hammer-wielding thunder-god Donar/Thor, and both are warrior-gods, but their names do not correspond. The Slavic god Perunu and the Baltic god Perkunas functionally correspond to the prominent power gods Thor and Indra, but their name is related to Vedic Parjanya, a minor rain-god (as such related to Indra in his elemental role of cloud-breaker). Jupiter corresponds with Tiwaz/Tyr in both name and function; however, Jupiter has the attribute of Indra (lightning) but a different function, while his Vedic name-counterpart Dyaus is a nature god not classed among the trifunctionality gods. The major Roman god Mars corresponds etymologically to the minor Vedic gods the Maruts, etc.: common names, motifs and symbols have recombined to yield different pantheons.

These changes in virtually every concrete aspect of the pantheon (also in the mythical anecdotes, a subject too large to deal with here), yield a possibly important clue to which version of the Indo-European religion is closest to the original. Indeed, when we compare the religions of the different Indo-European peoples in all their aspects, we can reconstruct fragments of a genealogical tree of mythological motifs. We find that there is one which has well-articulated counterparts to almost every element in every one of the other branches: the Vedic tradition. Thus, by tabulating all the elements in all the attested versions of the myth of the Divine Twins rescuing the Sun Maiden (e.g. the twin-horsemen or Ashvins saving the dawn-goddess Usha from the clutches of the night), we find that nearly all the elements attested anywhere are present in either the Vedic or the Ramayana version of this myth.[89]

When we find that two of the other traditions have an important motif in common, we also find it back in the Vedic tradition (for a further elaboration of this weighty point, I refer to Shrikant Talageri's work). The one important theme attested in many mythologies but not in the Veda, viz. the successive generations of gods violently dethroning the former one to assume kingship in heaven themselves (a myth central to Hesiodos' family history of the gods, the *Theogonia*, and which came to incorporate some of the genuinely Indo-European episodes of struggle between individ-

[89] Donald J. Ward: "An Indo-European Mythological Theme in Germanic Tradition", in Cardona ed.: *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, p.405-420.

ual gods), turns out to be a later borrowing from Mesopotamia.[90]

Bruce Lincoln estimates that "the Indo-Iranians generally tend to have been the most conservative of the Indo-European families in their preservation of religious materials. This is no doubt due in large measure to the existence of a well-established priestly class, a tradition of faithful oral transmission of texts, and a continuing sense of cosmogonical/cosmological consciousness in both the Indian and the pre-Islamic Iranian communities."[91] Another reason is simply that the Indo-Iranian scriptures are older than is usually assumed, and that they were composed when this mythology was fully alive, while Greek mythology has been recorded at a much later date and the mythologies of the other European branches (from Celtic to Armenian) have only been recorded when they were already being eclipsed by Christianity.

Closely linked with the Indo-European religion are the Indo-European customs and institutions. Indo-European society was definitely a layered society, in which the classes had well-defined functions, roughly corresponding to the trifunctionality scheme. The custom of class endogamy (marriage confined to members of the same class) seems predominant but not absolute: in many cases, such as in the Celtic and Germanic societies and in Homeric Greece, marriage was predominantly endogamous within these classes. For some of the Indo-European branches we simply do not have the necessary information, but in early Roman society we know of a law allowing commoners to marry members of the nobility, indicating that this had been prohibited.

Greek writers describe the Iranian strictness about upholding the family's purity, which went as far as favouring incestuous marriages. Here, Max Weber's concept of "family charisma" (the preservation of which was the reason for caste endogamy) certainly comes in handy, but its reach is wider than Indo-European culture: thus, the Egyptian Pharaohs, believed to be of divine descent, could only marry equals if they married their own sisters.

While social mobility was restricted, it could be cumulative: over generations, a serf family could become land-owning and ultimately enter the nobility, but the newly acquired status only became inalienable after three generations. On the other hand, class

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[90] C. Scott Littleton: "Is the 'Kingship in Heaven' Theme Indo-European?", in Cardona ed.: *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, p.383-404.

[91] B. Lincoln: "Death and Resurrection in Indo-European Thought", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, p.248.

membership was certainly not based exclusively on heredity, since even family membership was not: adoption of a non-member led to full membership status, and expulsion of a member led to full deprivation of the rights inherent in membership.

While Celtic society did have a class closely corresponding to the Brahmins in India, other Indo-European societies did not set a class apart purely for the first function (law and religion): its office-holders were recruited from the other prestigious ranks in society. On the whole, it would not be correct to say that Indo-European society was a caste society with strict prohibition of intermarriage between classes; but even less correct to say that it was an egalitarian society.

Laws and institutions were considered to be related with religion in a specific way. As Haudry writes, "it would be an anachronism to see in the law system the 'secular' counterpart of religion; Mitra-Contract is not less religious than Varuna-Oath. But, according to a recurrent Brahminical formula, Mitra is the day, Varuna the night: law is the day face, what we would call rational, of the relations of which religion represents the night face, the mysterious."[92] That is why priestly and judicial functions were usually entrusted to the same individuals.

The same concepts underlying religion are also present in the legal institutions. Thus, the trifunctionality reappears in three methods of marriage: marriage arranged on a religious basis, marriage by personal choice, and marriage by purchasing. Other schemes and legal concepts are also attested as belonging to a common Indo-European heritage, starting with the patrilineal basis of the family. The modern scheme of private/public was not in operation; instead, there was the graded distinction between the four circles of belonging: family, clan, tribe, nation. The same structures of authority were perceived, at least as legal metaphor, in each of these circles: thus, the king was the "father of the nation".

In poetic metres and formulas too, a common heritage is distinguishable. Thus, to name the first one to which modern philology has drawn attention (Adalbert Kuhn in 1853): the Greek formula ***kleos aphthiton***, "imperishable glory" (Homer), is the exact correlate of the Vedic formula ***akshitam shravah***. This formula is at once the expression of a central value upheld by (the leading classes among) the Indo-Europeans: immortality through fame.

[92] J. Haudry: *op.cit.*, p.92.

The Slavic people even took it as their name: the word *Slav* correlates with Vedic *shravah*, "fame".

From this concern for the acclaim of their (contemporary and future) fellow human beings, some religion scholars have deduced that the Indo-Europeans had a "shame culture" rather than a "guilt culture". Since this distinction usually carries a Christian bias favouring the "truly ethical guilt" as against the "conventionalist shame", we may have a little intermezzo about these concepts here. It may be pointed out that the concern for fame and its negative counterpart shame stems from a natural assumption that the judgment of the peer group is, after all, the only yardstick on which a community can agree in practice. Thus, scholars do not judge one another's work by an absolute standard, but by the standards on which qualified members of the community agree (though they aspire to the absolute truth, they are limited human beings); the objective standard by which they all swear, has in practice to be embodied as best as possible in the collective judgment of the qualified peer group. Ethical standards too, though one can seek an absolute and objective foundation for them, are in practice the standards handled by the community: not living up to these standards leads to public opprobrium, so that shame is the proper feedback for bad conduct, just as fame is the proper feedback for excellent conduct.

Cases of individuals who are "not understood", whose farsighted advice is scorned by society, whose momentous scientific discovery is ridiculed by the academic establishment, or whose ethically good actions cause outrage among narrow-minded neighbours, can be considered as the exception, not the rule.[93] And even the so-called "shame culture" takes that situation into account in its public consciousness as expressed in its literature: thus, China, shame culture par excellence (*vide* the Chinese-originated expression "to lose face"), has a whole literature about civil servants who suffer opprobrium because they try to maintain standards against the pressures from a corrupt environment. The very act of daring to go against the herd, of taking a leadership role in serving long-term public interests and choosing the hard rather than the popular path, is itself ultimately a source of fame. But

[93] The Christian bias against the fame/shame culture is based on the public rejection and ridicule suffered by the Messiah, who was identified with Isaiah's "man of sorrow, despised and rejected and acquainted with grief".

ordinarily, the fact remains that qualities and achievements are readily recognized for what they are by the peer group, and that one should not imagine oneself to be above judgment by one's fellow-men. Therefore, fame and shame are very practical yardsticks to judge the calibre of one's actions.

When Krishna talks to Arjuna on the Kurukshetra battlefield, he admonishes Arjuna not to shy away from his duty with the argument: "People will talk of your eternal infamy; and for one held in esteem, infamy is worse than death." (Gita 2:34) Yet, Krishna goes on to give more than just social reasons, and to give a truly universal foundation for man's conduct; but acclaim by one's fellow-men is and remains the ordinary sign of being on the right track, and infamy in the eyes of one's peers is the sign of being wrong. There is no contradiction between genuine ethics and a concern for fame and shame. In spite of what colonial and missionary observers used to believe, there is nothing inferior or unethical about so-called shame cultures, nor about the Indo-Europeans' valuation of "imperishable fame".

Among the things which differentiate the Indo-European traditions from other traditions, we may mention the attitude towards the king. Some Indo-European peoples had hereditary kingship as far back as we can see, others had elective kingship, normally from among the nobility class. The king had a religious function, he took the lead in public worship, but he was not worshipped himself. He was the representative of his people before the gods, the embodiment of the nation's religiosity and "rightness" (cfr. the link between *rex/raja* and words meaning "right", "to straighten"), but not the embodiment of the divine before his people. This is different from the culture of the Japanese, the ancient Egyptians, and the Dravidians, where the king himself was a god and an object of worship (cfr. the worship of some of Tamil Nadu's recent Chief Ministers).

The king had a ritual function which subjected him to a number of limitations and taboos. Where there was a separate class of religious personnel, these Brahmins and Druids took over many of these religious constraints, leaving the king to a more secular role. Even then, the king was the embodiment of national unity, but most power was in the hands of second-level chieftains, a prefiguration of the feudal power equation in medieval Europe. The situation in the Roman Republic, i.e. after the abolition of kingship as

an effective political institution, was that the king had a purely religious function, and this may well have been a restoration of the original condition. In the trifunctionality scheme, the king belonged to the first function, that of sovereignty with its double, magical and juridical aspect, and less to the second function, that of warfare and of the actual enforcement of authority.

In Greek accounts of the Persian (Achaemenid) empire, we find an abhorrence of the disproportionate power and pomp surrounding the Persian king; these accounts were to fix in the European mind a notion of "oriental despotism". To be sure, the Persians were Indo-Europeans, but they had taken over Mesopotamia and Elam, where they set up their capital, and adopted much of the Babylonian and Elamite polity and court ritual. The European branches all had a graded and decentralized system of authority, mostly with elected kings with limited powers. In the Indo-Aryan branch too, absolute monarchy was unknown. It is not unfair to say that the Indo-Europeans' conception of kingship was more human and reasonable, less exalted and submissive than that of certain contemporary peoples (in this respect, Hitler with his quasi-religious, absolutist "leader principle", was far removed from the "Aryan" model). This is not to idealize the Indo-Europeans in terms of modern democratic norms (thus, I doubt Haudry's view that the Indo-Europeans did not know slavery), but the more measured or graded view of the relation between ruler and subjects is a point that may be cited in their favour.

A survey of religion and social values cannot be complete without mentioning the subject of death. Among most peoples, there is not one single, official view of what happens at death (as there is in the Church), but some predominant conceptions can be traced. Throughout the Indo-European family there is a common belief in a glorious afterlife in an afterworld: the Walhalla, the Elysian Fields, or (in the Baltic tradition) the western end of the world where the sun-goddess sits in the cosmic tree. Yet, this glorious afterlife is not the only option: there is also the Hades, the underworld where people live as shadows. The latter view has been linked with pre-Indo-European agricultural societies, where people returned into the earth and into oblivion, as opposed to the Indo-European expectation of heaven and eternal glory. Alternatively, the opposition could be a social rather than an ethnic and civilizational one: only the heroes who have earned fame, go to the glorious afterworld, while the non-descript people descend into oblivion.

If the afterworld was so happy, it is not altogether logical (but this happens in human customs) that the Indo-European funeral, be it burial or cremation, was marked by excessive mourning. As far as we can gather from "Old European" art and from surviving cultural traces among the Basques, mourning was not encouraged among the pre-Indo-European peoples, who did not decorate and equip their dead so elaborately either. Where burial is the custom among Indo-Europeans, the deceased gets fully decorated and equipped: this was probably done in view of the well-attested notion of the after-death journey to the hereafter.

Note that some of these ideas have percolated into Christian imagery, which could not have it from the Old Testament, where an afterlife is not mentioned and the human personality is apparently identified with his living body (the resurrection as envisaged by Ezekiel is also a purely physical affair: the dead rising from their graves and their decomposed bodies re-acquiring flesh). Then again, the fact that the soul makes a journey to an afterworld does not give the soul an independent status nor detract from the centrality of the world of the living. The idea that the soul has a personality unrelated to the body, so that it can take on different bodies in a succession of rebirths, is apparently only attested among the Balts, incidentally the only ones with a tradition of Indian Urheimat memories.

In Virgil's *Aeneis* there is an explanation of the whole theory of reincarnation, synthesizing the belief in a glorious afterworld (for the heroes), the belief in a sad and shadowy existence in the underworld (for the opposite of the heroes), and the belief in reincarnation after going through the river of oblivion (for most). But this seems to be based on a conscious synthesis of indigenous and foreign ideas rather than an account of traditional Roman belief. For all we know, reincarnation was definitely not a pan-Indo-European belief.

In a schematic and stereotyped formulation, Leigh Jellison Hansen summarizes the contrast between Indo-European and pre-Indo-European this way: "It is hardly far-fetched to see here evidence for the opposing natures of the two peoples: the Old Europeans, worshipping Earth as the giver of all benefits to an agricultural society: unconcerned with status and rank, attuned to nature's cycles of beginning and ending, birth and rebirth, and feeling themselves a part of these cycles; and the Indo-Europeans, whose

culture and economy was not dependent on agriculture and the concept of natural regeneration of crops, to an ideal world perhaps unattainable in life, where virtue and courage would be rewarded, as in battle; with a desire to preserve wealth and status even after death, and a corresponding urge to deny mortality and the end which invariably follows a beginning."[94] This idyllic description of pre-Indo-European conceptions is not based on any serious evidence (the same author shows that the Etruscans had a notion of a kind of angel awaiting the deceased, implying that they had a notion of an afterlife too), but that of the Indo-European view is realistic.

The notion of reincarnation is commonly used to classify the Upanishadic and Puranic religion among the pre-Indo-European traditions, but the Veda among the genuinely Indo-European ones, "which had no notion of reincarnation". More generally, an argument from comparative religion which is often used against the Indian Urheimat theory, is that Hindu culture as it appears in the Puranas knows of distinctly non-Vedic elements which are not apparently shared with the rest of the Indo-European family. Most importantly, the practice of asceticism and meditation, quite central to Hindu culture, and classically linked with the notion of "liberation from the wheel of reincarnation", is only marginally referred to in the Vedas and is not apparently attested among the more westerly Indo-European branches.

This problem is really easy to solve. Firstly, both the theory of reincarnation and karma and the practice of asceticism have been gradually developed (as is clear from the internal development of the Vedic tradition from the Rg-Veda Samhita to the Upanishads), mostly after the other branches of the Indo-European community had moved westward. Secondly, to the extent that the ascetic tradition was contemporary with or anterior to the composition of the Rg-Veda, it was being developed not in the Sapta-Sindhu area where the Veda was composed and whence the emigrants left westward, but in the more easterly part of the Aryan homeland (say, the Gangotri area, Kashi, Bihar, just those areas associated till today with yoga or with the origins of Buddhism and Jainism). Puranic and Shramanic traditions developed within the Indo-European culture, but in an area different from the one that brought

[94] Leigh Jellison Hansen: "Death and the Indo-Europeans: Some Traditions", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1980/1-2.

forth most of the Indo-European expansion, and probably also at a time later than most of this expansion.

Another religious motif that has been brought up as exemplifying the opposition between Aryan and pre-Aryan, is the mother goddess, the object of a lot of colourful speculation. We are told that the Aryans were ugly male chauvinists with a patriarchal religion virtually excluding goddesses; that the Greek goddesses were mostly borrowed from pre-Aryan matriarchal populations; and that the mighty presence of goddesses in at least the Puranic pantheon proves that India too had originally known a matriarchal society which gradually managed to introduce its goddesses into the Aryan pantheon.

In fact, goddesses are fully present in the Vedic and Indo-European religion itself. Male gods have a female consort, and more importantly, there are a handful of prominent goddesses in their own right, e.g. the dawn goddess: Vedic Usha, Latin Aurora, Greek Eoos, Germanic Ostarra (whence the spring festival name Easter, spring being the dawn of the year). In the Rg-Veda, there are more verses invoking Mother Earth than Father Sky. If on the whole, gods are more prominent than goddesses, it is merely a realistic reflection of the worldly state of affairs: women are not less important than men, but in most societies they live slightly more in the background. The goddess evidence is certainly not such that it would stamp the Harappan society as non-Aryan, and a stray goddess statue in the fragmentary remains of cultures cannot decide on the Aryan or non-Aryan character of, say, the Kurgan culture.

Summing up, comparative religion is capable of establishing a degree of cultural similarity and common heritage between the Indo-European-speaking nations. It is definitely not true that the Indo-European family is merely "a system of isoglosses", as linguists used to say: there once was a family of tribes living together in a common Indo-European homeland, sharing a common (though not monolithic) outlook on religion and common mythological motifs, as well as common social institutions. They took this common heritage with them when they spread and assimilated other peoples, gradually modifying it through a natural internal development as well as through assimilation of borrowed elements. The differentiation had already started in their common homeland, and the contrast between Vedic and non-Vedic ("Puranic") elements within Hinduism goes back to this earliest stage of plurality

within a common Proto-Indo-European culture. Comparative religion can suggest historical contact with other cultures, esp. those of Central Asia. But it cannot by itself decide on the Urheimat question, and it has most certainly not furnished proof that the Urheimat lay outside India.

2.11. Literary evidence

So far, the entire reconstruction of early Indo-European history smells of speculation, even when highly technical methods of linguistic and archaeological investigation are used. What would really reassure us, is some conscious human testimony, some literature describing the whole process. The only literature that could possibly give such information is found in India: the Puranas, read together with the Vedas and the epics. The Puranic evidence has been brilliantly interpreted and presented by Shrikant Talageri, and I will not repeat his contribution here, except for the most general outline.

From the Puranas, the genealogy of the kings of North India can be read or reconstructed. By analogy with historical dynasties, we may assume an average of 18 years for the reign of a king, and this gives an approximate chronology along with the genealogy. By this reckoning, the key figure, Manu Vaivasvata, associated with the legend of the Flood, ruled in the year 3102, an important point of reference in the Hindu calendar (its identification with the "beginning of Kali Yuga" is of later date, so that its original rationale is not fully established; a mighty event is the most plausible explanation).

In the subsequent centuries, we find all of North India divided between a number of dynasties or tribes, of whom the following are important for our story: the Aila or Lunar dynasty based in Prayag, and the Aikshvaku or Solar dynasty based in Ayodhya (representing the Aryan presence in the eastern half of North India since the earliest history). Other dynasties are also mentioned by name though their history is not given, either because they were politically unimportant or because they were relegated to geographically far corners whence little information reached the Puranic chroniclers; but their very existence serves to remind us that the "Aryan" area extended even beyond those areas in which known episodes of history are situated. After king Yayati, the Lunar dynasty splits into five branches, of which the Druhyus domi-

nated in Kashmir and Pakhtoonistan, the Anus in Panjab, the Purus in the Saraswati area, and the Turvasus and Yadus in a more southerly area from Sindh to Vidarbha.

The fact that these tribes are said to be originating in the Ganga basin, as far east as Prayag, while other Aryans lived further to the east as far as Bengal, goes against the hypothesis that these tribes had recently arrived from the west. As far back as the literary evidence goes, these Aryans were living in the Ganga basin, and their settlement in the Saraswati and Indus basins may have been a recent development or may have been a take-over from other Aryans already settled there. They were certainly settled there before the heyday of the Harappan city culture began.

The Purus are the tribe which developed the Rg-Vedic tradition, which was a variation in the spectrum of related Aryan traditions shared by the Aryan tribes all over North India. This religious tradition of the Purus, based in the Saraswati area, was to become the most prestigious and normative of the "colours" in the Aryan religious spectrum. There is ample evidence in the Rg-Veda that the fire-sacrifice was a ritual not shared by all the Aryan tribes, and that the Purus looked down upon those who had different rites (but not necessarily *because of* this difference in rites). The genesis of the Vedic tradition as distinct from the other Aryan traditions and its subsequent relation with its sister traditions is a most important line of further research.

The Rg-Veda, a book of hymns with very little information on political events, relates one major event in some detail: the Battle of the Ten Kings, in which ten clans belonging to the Anu and Druhyu tribes are defeated by the Puru king Sudas. By chrono-genealogical reckoning, the battle must have taken place in the late 3rd millennium BC. The Veda says in so many words that the defeated tribes are compelled to leave the country; though we need not accept at face value the Vedic suggestion of a causal relation between the two separate facts of the battle and the Iranian migration. Their names are given, and we recognize some of the Iranian tribes: Pakhtoons, Medes, Parths, Persians. The Bhrigu tribe may plausibly be linked with the Phrygians, as the Armeno-Phrygian and the Iranian emigrations were part of the same movement, went in the same direction, and retained linguistic closeness. Other identifications are more speculative, like Alinas as Hellenes. Definitely untenable is the identification of Druhyus as Druids, i.e.

Celts: it would seem that this Kentum-speaking tribe had emigrated much earlier. Leaving aside the possible non-Iranian identifications, we do find that the Iranian branch of the Indo-European family is fully represented.

At once, this explains the terms *Dasa* and *Dasyu*, frequently used to identify enemies of the Vedic people. Remembering that Iranian changes s into h, we can identify them with the Iranian terms *Daha*, in Greco-Roman sources, *Dahae*, the name of an eastern-Iranian tribe; and *Dahyu*, a word meaning "tribe" or "people". The fact that "all [the] references to *dasyu-hattya* ['slaughter of the Dasyus'] are found in those parts of the Rg-Veda which are traditionally regarded to be late parts of that text", does not prove, as Madhav Deshpande believes, that "even by the time of the late parts of the Rg-Veda, the attitudes of the Vedic Aryans had not significantly changed, and they still regarded the Dasyus as those who deserved to be killed by Indra".[95] Deshpande seems to think that these hostile references show a continuation of an earlier hostility, but at the same time he admits that this hostility is not at all attested at the earlier stage. The Dasyus were not the natives whom the Aryan invaders encountered at first and against whom they felt a hatred which ought to have subsided in the next centuries but failed to do so; rather, they were fellow Aryans with whom a conflict developed at a later stage, as is clear from the fact that the hostile references only appear in the later parts of the text

The *Devasurasamgram*, the clash between Devas and Asuras, fits into this scenario. There is no indication that the war between the Vedic Deva-worshippers and the Iranian-to-be Asura-worshippers was a religious war, i.e. that a religious difference was the motive of the war: thus, there is no divine injunction to fight the Dasas, merely the worshippers' prayer to grant victory against the Dasas. But the contending parties identified each other with their typical varieties of the all-Aryan cult: the Iranian reformer Zarathustra is angry with the Deva-worshippers, and consequently with the Devas themselves. The Vedic literature honours the Asuras as one class of gods, but later turns against them and redefines them as demons. Zarathustra rejects the Deva Indra as a demon, and the Veda calls the Dasas *anindrah*, "without Indra". Zarathustra rejects the animal sacrifices, which in his opinion pollute the sacred fire, and the Veda calls the Dasas *ayajyavah*, "without sacrifices".

[95] M. Deshpande: *op.cit.*, p.300.

Clearly, a political clash has been given a religious dimension. On the other hand, while a lone reformer develops an anti-Deva theology, the ritual aspect of his religion (then much more important than the doctrinal part) remains largely the same, so that even the Muslims will refer to the Zoroastrians as "fire-worshippers". At the practical level, the Avestan and Vedic traditions remain close. At any rate, all the relevant information in the available Vedic and Avestan literature converges on the scenario that the Iranians were driven out of their homeland in northwestern India.

The Indian past of the Iranians is confirmed by their preservation of some elements of the Rama legend. While the Puranic evidence dates Krishna to later than the postulated Iranian emigration, Rama definitely precedes it, and should have left some impression on the collective consciousness of the Iranians. That there is some kind of connection between Rama and the Iranians, is admitted by the most daring Aryan-Invasionists. In a Bengali study, summarized and discussed in English by O.K. Ghosh, Prof. Sukumar Sen claims that Rama was an Iranian himself, hailing from Margu (now Merv in Turkmenistan).[96]

If we accept the statistical average of 18 years per dynastic generation, Yudhishthira of the Mahabharata (generation 94 in the Puranic list as reconstructed by F.E. Pargiter) would have lived in the 15th century BC, and Rama (generation 65) in the 21st century. The average may be underestimated (e.g. because it is quite possible that short-lived reigns which left no memories of important events were not recorded by the Puranic authors), but Western-oriented scholars who want to put Indian history as late as possible, take it as an absolute maximum, and would put Rama in a time-bracket between 2024 and 1646 BC. Alright, let us accept this dating for now. "Hence", according to Ghosh, "Ram lived during the time of the earliest Aryan invasion of India." And that, of course, opens perspectives.

To make Ram an Iranian, it must be assumed that the Indian tradition has its geography all wrong. The Lanka which Rama conquered, was in fact Mohenjo-Daro, a city which became an island during the monsoon rains. It was a Dravidian city ruled by Ravana, the Indo-Aryan corrupt pronunciation of Tamil *Iraivan*,

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[96] O.K. Ghosh: "Was Ram an Iranian?", *Illustrated Weekly of India*, 27/2/1993, with reference to Sukumar Sen: *Ram Itihaser Prak-katha* (Bengali: "Introduction to the History of Ram").

"lord". Kishkhindha, the city of the Vanara tribe which helped Rama, was in Baluchistan. Ram's own capital lay beyond Bahlika (Balkh in northern Afghanistan); on the Harayu river in the northern Iranian-Afghan border zone; Harayu is the evolved Iranian pronunciation of what must have been Sarayu in Ram's time, a name brought into India by the Aryan invaders and subsequently given to a river in Uttar Pradesh, where still later, ignorant Indians named a city after Ram's original capital in Iran. Similarly, the name Kishkhindha was transferred to a place in Karnataka, the river name Saraswati (Iranian Harahvaiti, to the south of the Harayu) was given to the river in Sapta-Sindhu (which had already disappeared at that time, but let that pass), and so on.

As Mr. Talageri has shown, this type of relocation of Puranic geography only lands the historian in endless trouble. We don't even make a point of it being highly pretentious and almost cranky: proper scholarship would require that the unreliability of the Puranic indications is first proven, independently of the theory to which one wants to "adapt" it, i.e. the Aryan Invasion theory. The only way to read Puranic geography, at least as far as it pertains to the regions which the Puranic writers knew (i.e. North India in the broadest sense), is the way Indians have always understood it; otherwise, contradictions are inevitable (by contrast, it is quite possible that the South-Indian name *Lanka* really refers to a place in Andhra Pradesh, as many scholars believe). However, we must thank Prof. Sen and Mr. Ghosh for bringing to our attention the fact that Ram, or at least his guru Vasishtha, is actually mentioned in the Iranian scriptures.

According to Ghosh, "Ram appears in the earliest stratum of the Avesta, in the Yasnas (1:3, 2:3, 3:5, 7:5, 16:4, 22:20, 68:15) and Visperad (2:9, 7:7), between 1900 and 1600 BC. There he is Raman, a god of peace, associated with Vayu, the god of the wind. This was before the Zoroastrian revolution. Ram's guru Vasishtha is mentioned in the Avesta as Vahishta. There is also a Gatha to him, the Vahishte-Ishti-Gatha. Even in late Sassanian times (6th century AD), several Iranian cities still used the name Ram... H.H. Wilson, the famous 19th century English scholar, in his *Antiquities and Coins of Afghanistan and North-India* mentions a ruined city near Herat on the Horayu or Hari Rud river, known to the Arabs as Ramshehristan." The latter name would mean "area of the city of Ram".

This O.K. Ghosh is a secularist writing with the undisguised intention of discrediting the movement to build a Ram temple on Ram's traditional birthsite in Ayodhya. Given the anti-temple party's record of streamlining history, Mr. Ghosh's claims need careful verification. Further, he seems to take homonyms for references to the hero Ram: the name Raman, "the happy-maker", is not, or not exclusively, connected with just this one historical character. Similarly, Vasishtha is a clan name and need not exclusively refer to Ram's personal guru. However, there is a more reliable source claiming the presence of the name Ram in Iran. The Assyrian king Sargon II (721-705 BC) conquered the "dominion of Ramateja". The Assyrian king Asarhaddon (665-626 BC) was asked for help against the Medes, one of whom was Ramateja of Urakazabarna in the district of Ecbatana.[97] So, names based on the name Ram are indeed attested in Iran.

This is only what we would expect if the Iranians came from India. Further, the list of names doubly attested, once in India and once in Iran-Afghanistan, can perfectly be explained on that same basis, rather than on the basis of the Aryan Invasion theory: Indians took names of rivers and cities with them to the west, as they later took them to Southeast Asia. What is claimed as evidence for a migration from Iran to India, is quite compatible with the hypothesis of a migration in the opposite direction, and that without changing the explicit geographical indications of the literary sources.

If Iranians and Indians separated as early as 4,000 years ago, even while they are classed together (along with the Dardic branch in Kashmir and the Pamirs) as forming one of the branches of Indo-European, we can deduce that the other branches must have separated earlier, even much earlier in the case of the European and Tokharic branches. The Druhyus were living in a region bordering Central Asia, in contact with the early horse-catchers, and may have organized the earliest overland trade-routes. A thorough scrutiny of the Puranic information on them and on people living before Manu Vaivasvata may yield some traces of facts pertaining to earlier emigrations.

The capital fact is that the Puranas, to the extent that they

[97] Mentioned by P. Bosch-Gimpera, who believes that "the name suggests that a proto-Aryan princedom survived itself in the west of Iran until a relatively late date" (which would imply that Ram's original location had been even farther west than the Harayu valley); in "The Migration Route of the Indo-Aryans", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1974/1.

mention migrations, only describe emigrations and, for the early period, intra-Indian migrations from east to west. Later the Purus will extend their domain back to the east, probably due to the decline of the Saraswati environment. This eastward expansion of the Vedic culture into non-Vedic Aryan territory is what western scholars have wrongly interpreted as the eastward expansion of the late-Vedic Aryans into non-Aryan territory. The over-all impression is one of a thriving and thickly populated North India, from which people emigrated either as traders, or as political enemies who decided that "this country ain't big enough for both of us".

While the Puranas do not reach back far enough to give the whole story of the Indo-European dispersal, whatever information they do give converges on the Indian Urheimat scenario, not on an Aryan Invasion scenario.

2.12. Conclusion

In this chapter we have made a brief *tour d'horizon* of the material relevant to the Aryan Invasion theory. We have taken a sympathizing look at the case for an Indian homeland of the Indo-Aryans and of the Indo-Europeans in general. We have used many a "maybe" and "probably", much to the irritation of some reviewers who prefer scholarship to be ready-made for political use; but in this field of "indications" and "conjectures", where a hypothesis is already better than most if it is "coherent" and "plausible" though as yet largely unproven, any air of certainty would be misplaced. We have pointed out some of the elements which might plead in favour of the Indian Urheimat. At the end of it, I for one, am not aware of any point at which the Invasionists could honesttly say: "This here, this proves the Aryan Invasion."

Being convinced of an Indian Urheimat is yet another matter. The case for considering the Vedic and the Harappan culture as instances of one and the same civilization is fairly strong, though much research remains to be done. But this does not necessarily imply that the Harappan culture was purely Indo-European, nor does it prove that the Harappan language was native to India. The case for placing the Indo-European Urheimat in northern India is still too outlandish to mention in decent company, but we cannot say that solid findings are available that conclusively refute it. On the contrary, it is the dominant South Russian Urheimat theory that finds itself unsupported by most types of evidence. The Indian

Urheimat theory, if not yet solidly proven, is at least fully compatible with the fragments of information which we do have.

One thing about which there can be no doubt at all, is that racially, any immigrations have made no substantial changes in the Indian population. The spread of languages was not a matter of replacement of one speech community by another, but of assimilation. The indo-europeanization of either Europe or India or both, from whichever homeland, is the migration of a language, not of a people; and to the extent that people migrated, they have mingled and become indistinguishable from the "natives". Even if either Indo-Aryan or Dravidian have come from outside, the people who speak these languages have not.

THREE

ETHNIC SEPARATISM

3.1. What's in a name?

The colonial term *Aboriginal*, "pre-colonial native", has been indigenized in India through its literal translation *Adivasi*. The introduction of this term has been attributed (wrongly, I believe) to Mahatma Gandhi, already the father of the neologisms *Harijan* ("people of God", for the untouchables) and *Girijan* ("hill people", tribals). The term "aboriginal", and subsequently its translation, is now used to designate the members of certain communities on which the Christian Churches have eager designs: the forest-dwelling and hill-dwelling tribes. As fairly isolated and non-literate communities with presumably little polemical tradition, they have seemed to form an easy prey for the missions. The term *adivasi* was adopted as an essential element in the missionary strategy.

The term *Aboriginal* has gained currency in the "New World", where it made good sense from a European viewpoint: a white colonist (or an imported black slave) was a "new inhabitant", and a Native American, Native Australian, Papua or Maori was an "original inhabitant". But even there, the question can be asked: how original is original? We know that the Austronesian-speaking Maoris have taken over New Zealand from an earlier population, not more than a few thousand years ago. Within America, one nation had lost its land to another nation: e.g. the Aztecs in Mexico were invaders from the north, and they were defeated by the Spaniards with the help of oppressed Aboriginals who took their chance to throw off the "foreign" yoke.

Of the Australian Aboriginals, we know that they were immigrants (presumably from India), albeit some 40,000 years ago and entering virgin territory which they "stole" only from the kangaroos. The Native Americans, who still resemble Old World populations like the Tibetans as much as a modern Argentinian resembles a Spaniard or Italian, are newcomers to their homeland of less than 20,000 years. Ultimately, it seems we have all come from Africa, or at least from some given limited territory where one primate tribe crossed the threshold from animal to human; all the rest of the world is inhabited by invaders. This is not to say that the worldwide Aboriginal movement we are witnessing today has a

false agenda: a lot of their cultural, ecological and political demands are justified. But to keep things in perspective, it must be clear from the outset that there is no such thing as a natural and inherent connection between a piece of land and a group of people.

Adivasi is the Sanskrit translation of "original inhabitant" or "aboriginal", terms which were routinely used to designate the pre-colonial inhabitants, and their surviving descendants, of the "New World", America and Oceania. The term presupposes the presence of a non-original population, viz. the colonizers (along with other populations which they have imported, such as the black slaves). This term says one thing about its referent, viz. that he is not an immigrant, and another about its non-referent, viz. that he is an immigrant, a colonizer.

The excluded ones, the non-*adivasis*, are all the urban and agricultural communities, not only the "Aryans" but also the Dravidians. The Veddoid streak in the population of South India (kinship with the Vedda tribe that still forms 1% of Sri Lanka's population) is therefore also called pre-Dravidian, implying that the "Dravidian" newcomers mixed with an earlier Veddoid population. The term *Adidravida*, "Aboriginal of Dravida", has already been appropriated by low-castes who thereby claim to descend from this earlier population — a claim which it will in fairness have to share with the bulk of the South Indian population, regardless of whether it adopted the Dravidian languages from newcomers or not.

The foremost implication of the term *adivasi* was that the non-tribal population could be considered as immigrants who had colonized India and chased the aboriginals to the most inaccessible places, where they survived under difficult circumstances, until at long last the Christian missionaries came to give them back their dignity. The message was that the urban elites who were waging a struggle for independence, could not claim to be the rightful owners of the country anymore than the British could. And the Hindu culture could not claim to be the original culture of India anymore than Christianity.

Before independence, the term *adivasi* was already useful as an ideological tool for relatively justifying the foreign occupation of a country, as it implied that the country had been ruled by "foreigners" since thousands of years. But it was after independence, when colonization had become a dirty word even in its source countries,

that the term *adivasi* would get its full impact. The Christian missions distanced themselves from the colonial institutions and even re-wrote their own history to show that they had somehow been an anti-colonial force all along. In their source countries, they were getting the stigma of having been physical and ideological pillars of colonialism: in India, they immediately tried to pass this stigma on to their inveterate enemies, the Hindus.

Whatever one may otherwise think of the missionaries, one has to admit that they are clever. They have perfected the strategy of working on people's minds (it is partly from them that Marxists have acquired their own proficiency in the same). They see what works against Christianity, and immediately forge it into a weapon against other religions. Marxism had denounced Christian religion as the "opium of the people", and Christian Liberation theologians are now denouncing Hinduism as a kind of "opium of the people" ("instilling acquiescence with its doctrine of Karma", etc.), as opposed to Christianity's "social involvement".[1] Similarly, anti-colonialists had denounced Christianity's crucial ideological role in colonialism, and now missionaries are denouncing Hinduism as a religion of colonizers, who took the land from those poor Aboriginals.

There is a climate of revaluation of non-European cultures, which has come centre-stage with the 500th anniversary of the colonization of the Americas. In this climate, implanted Christianity as a relic of the harshest colonialism is threatened by a cultural self-rediscovery of the "natives". Some Amerindian groups have ceremonially sent the Bible back to the Pope. I heard this from a missionary, home on holiday from his usual work in South America, when he gave a lecture about the Columbus anniversary: he called the Amerindians' gesture "horrible", and suggested that instead, they should "own up" the Bible. But that is exactly what the first missionaries in Pizarro's company had demanded of them: tactics have changed, the goal has not.

In India, the wave of native revival should naturally mean a revival and revaluation of Hinduism in the broadest sense, and a rejection of this obtrusive Christianity. But the missionaries have been maneuvering to put things upside down, to profile themselves as the guardians of the "real native" culture, and to use this

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[1] A typical example is Vishal Mangalwadi: *The World of Gurus*, 1979, an anti-Hindu pamphlet. Not that the gurus he mentions are not worthy of criticism, but they are falsely presented as typical representatives of Hindu Dharma.

wave to sweep away Hinduism as a "colonial imposition". Such is the effrontery of the missionary spirit.

The mission lobby writes articles to make its point explicitly, but in the first place it conditions everyone's discourse by pushing the term *adivasi*. And it works. The magic of the correctly devised word is impressive. In a French geographical and anthropological periodical *Géo*, the tribals of Bastar were called *les Indiens de l'Inde* ("the Indians of India", if you understand the pun). An Indologist recently said to me, off-hand: "The Adivasis are the original people of India — well of course, that is precisely what the word *adivasi* means."

What he illustrated in all innocence, was repeated more explicitly by a less innocent character, Gyanendra Pandey, one of India's most shameless negationists.[2] In his article *Hindus and Others: the Militant Hindu Construction*, he writes: "A special number of the RSS journal *Panchjanya*, devoted to the 'tribal' peoples of India and published in March 1982, is significantly titled 'Veer vanvasi ank'. The use of the term 'vanvasi' (forest- or jungle-dwellers) in place of the designation 'adivasi', which had come to be the most commonly used term among social scientists and political activists talking about tribal groups in India, is not an accident. Adivasi means original inhabitants, a status that the Hindu spokespersons of today are loath to accord to the tribal population of India."[3]

Gyanendra Pandey profits of the by now accomplished fact (which is "not an accident" either) of the widespread use of the ideological term *adivasi* instead of the adequate descriptive term *vanavasi* ("forest dweller"), not only by "political activists" like himself, but also by "social scientists" (a sector which in India is 95% Marxist to start with). When people re-adopt the neutral term *vanavasi*, he can portray that as a political act, and silently gloss over the heavy political content of the term *adivasi*. In fact, not just "Hindu spokespersons" but everyone who cultivates the scientific temper, will reject a term which carries the load of an entirely unproven, politically motivated theory, viz. that the tribals are "the" (i.e. the only) original inhabitants of India. Nobody is "loath to accord to the tribal population" the status of original inhabitants,

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[2] In his book *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Oxford University Press, Delhi 1990), Gyanendra Pandey claims that the Hindu-Muslim conflict is a colonial 'construction', thus denying a whole millennium of well-attested Islamic persecution.

[3] *Economical and Political Weekly*, 28/12/1991, p.3003.

but every objective observer and every right-minded citizen objects to the effective implication of the term *adivasi*, viz. that the non-tribals are not original inhabitants.

3.2. Colonial mission policy

The missionaries were not the only ones who wanted the tribals christianized. The colonial administration had had to suppress unrelenting tribal rebellions, especially in Chhotanagpur and in the extreme North-east, and thought conversion would be a good way to tame these "savages". The tribal rebellions, such as the *Santal Hool* of 1858, were directed against colonial economic policies which had aggravated an already older and seemingly unstoppable encroachment upon the tribals' traditional territories.

Apart from the destruction of enormous stretches of forest land in the Sultanate period as a military policy against the hide-outs of Hindu resisters (as by Balban, 13th century), the encroachment of non-tribals on the territory of these tribals had begun in the Moghul period, especially under Akbar and Jehangir, when the local Nagbansi dynasty became a vassal to the Moghul empire. In 1585, the raja Bairhal agreed to pay an annual tribute to the Moghul court. Subsequently, the Moghuls tightened their grip: "His successor, Durjansal, the 42nd raja, found it difficult to pay the required sum, and he was put in prison in Gwalior in the year 1616 by Jehangir, and remained there till 1628. From then onwards, the kings were reduced to tribute-paying chiefs under the Muslim governor of Bihar... The system of granting villages as *jagirs*, service grants or maintenance-grants... was gradually evolved to fill up the rapidly decreasing royal treasury."[4] That was the start of the exploitation of the tribals. Hindu and Muslim *jagirdars* and money-lenders were brought in.

This feudal system continued after the British annexation in 1765.[5] The colonial economic developments made things worse again, and it is no coincidence that most tribal rebellions took place in those areas (Bihar-Orissa-Bengal-Assam) that had been the first to fall into British hands, and had already gone through profound socio-economic changes as a result. The Chhotanagpur area saw

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[4] Martin Topno s.j.: "Pati and Parha: Social Structure of the Munda", *Sevartham* 1991 (1978).

[5] Admittedly, the term "feudal" is used in a very loose sense here, e.g. it does not include the institutionof serfdom typical for feudalism in the Middle Ages in Europe.

tribal rebellions in 1811, 1820, 1831, 1858 and 1899. Protestant missions started there in 1845, encouraged by the government.

That the British expected to serve their own interests by allowing the missionaries into the tribal areas, follows a pattern of colonial policy. Even the secularist French Third Republic stimulated the mission as an instrument of imperialism. The Christian converts were to be a fifth column of colonial interests. Only when missionary activity threatened political stability by antagonizing important sections of the native society, did the British authorities stop the hand of the missionaries.

For instance, the Naga tribals of the extreme North-East were purposely delivered to the soul hunger of the missionaries by the colonial government. A Belgian writer observes: "The British, who had a policy of transforming the border regions into a protective cordon of the empire, 'discovered' the Nagas in about 1830 but prohibited the entry in this area to anyone without official or military capacity,— which curiously did not exclude the Christian missionaries!... One might say that it was the administrators, and in their wake the ethnographers and missionaries who, by a need of rational classification and order, *invented* the Naga tribes and consequently Naga nationalism... In a concern to protect the tea plantations of Assam (from, among other things, the Naga incursions), the British pursued a long process of pacification, administration and christianization, deeper and deeper into the hill country. The Nagas vigorously resisted this expansion; the response to their rebellions consisted of punitive expeditions and the 'civilizing' missions..."[6]

All the later Christian propaganda about how the tribals' own religion had "naturally prepared" them for Christianity, really breaks its teeth on the fierce tribal resistance to the encroachment on their territory and culture by the first batches of Christian missionaries, in the Indian just like in the Amazonian forests. Thus, the Birsa rebellion among the Mundas started with an attack on a mission post on Christmas day of 1899.

Incidentally, the rebellion leader Birsa was an interesting example of the complex nativist response to the colonial-cum-missionary challenge: on the one hand, he was influenced by Christianity, claiming to receive visions in the way of the Biblical proph-

[6] Hélène Willemart: "Les Naga, Montagnards entre l'Inde et la Birmanie", *India* (bimonthly of Shanti Darshan Belgo-Indian Association), June 1992.

ets; on the other, he was a Hindu reformist, asking his fellow tribals to renounce witchcraft, intoxication and animal sacrifice, and to wear the sacred thread even while continuing to worship in sacred groves rather than in temples. On this point, the parallelism with the Arya Samaj is striking, and Christian propaganda is less than truthful when it claims these rebellions as proof for a natural tribal-Hindu antagonism. Even while attacking a class of landed and moneyed non-tribals, Birsa was not attacking but on the contrary upholding and reforming Hinduism, in its tribal version. For Birsa, Munda pride implied striking firmer roots in the larger Hindu ethos and rejecting Christianity.

But like elsewhere, the missions had an army of trained and motivated experts, and their persistence and increasingly sophisticated strategies of penetration finally won. They discovered the weak spots and started working on them. For instance, Father Constant Lievens s.j. has given valuable help to the tribals of Chhotanagpur in their juridical struggle with the *diku* (non-tribal) landlords: for the prize of roping in so many tribal souls, the missionaries were willing to pay a decent fare in the form of social assistance.

They could do so all the better because they disposed of lots of money, donations from Christians in the motherland whose income was increasing, in large part thanks to the exploitation of the colonies. Comparing the mission donations with the net economic gain which the European countries extracted from their colonies, one has to conclude that the colonized populations have themselves financed the goods and services brought in to demonstrate the generosity of Christianity. At any rate, the missionaries acquired a foothold which would allow them to rope in several millions of Indian tribals, many of them only after Independence.

3.3. To the United Nations

The logical consequence of the false doctrine embodied in the word *adivasi* is currently being enacted. Some "Adivasi" spokesmen are pushing for recognition by the United Nations as "the original inhabitants of India", on a par with the Native Americans, the Maoris and the Australian Aborigines in their respective countries. Foremost among them is Prof. A.K. Kisku, secretary-general of the Indian Council of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ICITP). Kisku was a member of the Lok Sabha in 1966-77 and a minister in

Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet in 1968-74. The ICITP introduces itself as a "non-political, non-communal, non-governmental human rights umbrella organization to campaign for the protection of the ADIVASIS — i.e. indigenous population — covering the entire subcontinent".[7] It likes to remind the world that "with its 60 million indigenous and tribal people, India has the largest indigenous population in the world (200 million)".

The design to declare the tribals as "aboriginals", insofar as it means declaring the non-tribals invaders, is based on false history and on non-applicable racial categories. Most non-tribals are historically ex-tribals who have taken to a non-tribal way of life; unlike the Native Americans, they have not been chased out before the advances of "civilization", but have integrated themselves into it. To be sure, the ICITP must get a fair chance to prove its point: all it has to do is prove that the non-tribals are not original inhabitants of India. Nobody will seriously trouble them with the (otherwise perfectly legitimate) demand for proof that the "adivasis" themselves are indeed aboriginals who have never immigrated.

The UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva has been looking into the claim that the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes of India are the indigenous population of India. The case for and against describing the Scheduled Castes as aboriginals will be dealt with in ch.5.3, but we may already state that Dr. Ambedkar, the unquestioned spokesman of Scheduled Castes interests, has rejected any description of the problems of caste and untouchability in terms of ethnicity and an aboriginal/invader divide. But the case for the tribals' status as "the aboriginals" may, at first sight, be better. So, on 31 July 1991 (and similarly on several earlier occasions) the India delegate at the Working Groups session, Prabhu Dayal, had to do his very best to refute the claim made on behalf of the tribals by Prof. Kisku.

When we look at Prof. Kisku's argumentation, we find that he is not even trying to prove his crucial point, viz. that the tribals are indigenous while the rest are not. The claim is made that "the Tribals are the autochtonous people of the land", but no argument is given except that they "are believed to be the earliest settlers in the Indian peninsula" and that they "are generally called the ***adivasis***, implying original inhabitants".[8]

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[7] In Prof. Kisku's "Urgent Appeal to Adivasis Abroad", *India* (bimonthly of Shanti Darshan Belgo-Indian Association), April 1992.

[8] The full statement was published in *Dalit Voice*, 1/6/1992.

Prof. Kisku does a good job in sketching the problems and injustices which the tribals are facing (often with government servants' complicity), and there is no doubt that his complaints have a factual basis. Of great political importance is his claim that the tribals seek to realize their autonomy within the framework of India's constitution, not through secession: "Tribal peoples' autonomy has been demanded within the framework of the Constitution and the Federation of India. None of the tribal groups have asked for secession from the country." We will look into the question of tribal separatism in ch.3.12-14, but for now we are happy to note that an official spokesman of an official organization of the tribals has declared in an official international forum that no tribal autonomy movement in India is seeking political separation from the Indian republic.

In his speech, Prof. Kisku does show that the tribes have a number of genuine grievances, that they want a larger autonomy, and that they are loyal to India. These are things which even the government of India would acknowledge; it is not to refute these that it had sent an emissary to Geneva. But what is altogether missing, is the first indication that the non-tribals are not indigenous, which alone would make the tribals "*the* indigenous population of India".

Mr. Dayal argued that the term "indigenous peoples" cannot be equated with Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. According to the pro-"aboriginal" paper *Dalit Voice*, he concentrated on showing that today there is no clear-cut separation between tribal and non-tribal segments of the population, quoting the "eminent sociologist" Prof. André Béteille: "In the beginning, nobody bothered to give a precise meaning to the term tribe. This did not create very much confusion so long as the groups which were dealt with could be easily located and differentiated from groups of other types. By and large, this was the case in Australia, Melanesia and in North America. In India, and also to a certain extent in Africa, the situation is conspicuously different. In this country, groups which correspond closely to the anthropologists' conception of tribes have lived in long association with communities of an entirely different type. Except in a few areas, it is very difficult to come across communities which retain all their pristine tribal character. In fact, most such tribal groups show in varying degrees elements of continuity with the larger society of India... In India hardly any of the

tribes exists as a separate society and they have all been absorbed, in varying degrees, into the wider society of India. The on-going process of absorption is not recent but dates back to the most ancient times."[9]

Dalit Voice claims that Prof. Béteille had merely "taken the ruling class line of argument" when he concluded that "ethnically speaking, most of the tribes in present-day India share their origins with the neighbouring non-tribal population. India has been a melting-pot of races and ethnic groups, and historians and anthropologists find it difficult to arrange the various distinct cultural, ethnic and linguistic groups in the chronological sequence of their appearance in the sub-continent."

Mr. Dayal further argued that many tribal populations have adopted either most of their vocabulary or even their mother tongue from their non-tribal neighbours. Most importantly, even at the genetic level, no clear-cut division between tribal and non-tribal could be substantiated. On the contrary, the Negrito element, supposedly the oldest racial layer in India's population (preserved on the Andamans), is not more in evidence among the tribals than among the others, and even the Australoid element, supposedly the second-oldest, is equally present in the tribal and non-tribal populations of India.

Concluding his argumentation, Mr. Dayal said: "In case the various criteria of indigenous populations were to be selectively applied to the Indian context, at least 300 or 400 million people could come within its ambit. I would therefore reiterate my government's view that ***tribals in India do not constitute what is understood by the term 'indigenous populations'.***"

So far, the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations has always accepted the Indian government's view. Prof. Kisku regretfully reports: "But now we hear in international forums like the UN or the ILO that the term ADIVASI (*adi* — original, and *vasi* — inhabitant) or the 'Tribes' cannot be equated with indigenous. We are scheduled as tribes in the Constitution and are therefore only 'creatures of the Constitution'."

He then goes on to try to evoke sympathy among the Western nations with a tale of helpless suffering: "There are violations of

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[9] Reported in *Dalit Voice*, 16/4/1992. Remark the falsity of the report's title: "André Béteille dupes SC/STs: says they are not indigenous peoples". Prof. Béteille never wrote that the tribals are non-indigenous, he merely refuses to exclude non-tribals from the "indigenous" category.

human rights of our people on a very large scale. Our people are being evicted from their traditional habitats, our forests are being denuded by construction of huge dams, expansion of industries, mining operations, and the resources are being taken away without our consent. We are becoming refugees in our own homelands, and losing our life and livelihood. The Narmada River Dam Project, Koel-Karo, Subarna Rekha and a host of other projects supported by the World Bank finances are killing us. Our culture, customs, ways of life etc. are being invaded into."[10]

There is no doubt that the tribal populations have genuine grievances, and their activism against perceived threats is in many cases legitimate. But why spoil a good cause by attaching it to a framework of false history? The ICITP would also create a lot more goodwill if it addressed the non-tribal Indians as co-indigenous brothers, rather than as invaders. The cause of tribal progress deserves support, but it must be freed of its association with a colonial-cum-missionary ploy of history falsification.

3.4. Tribal invaders

The definition tabled for approval before the United Nations in the "Year of the Indigenous Peoples", 1993, is as follows: "Indigenous peoples, communities and nations are those which are a historical continuation of the communities which have developed in their territory in the time before the invasion and colonization. They consider themselves as different from other sectors of society which presently are dominant in their territories or parts of them. They constitute a non-dominant part of society and are determined to develop their ancestral teiritory and ethnic identity and to pass these on to future generations as the basis for their survival as nations. This in accordance with their culture, social institutions and law systems. The right to determine who is indigenous and who is not, belongs to the indigenous peoples themselves."[11]

Definitions are often matters of great consequence, and one should carefully explore their implications. For now, a few remarks are in order.

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[10] The Narmada Dam has become an internationally controversial project, or in fact not even controversial as those who draw attention to it only do so to support the anti-Dam resistance. The other side of the story is told by Swapan Dasgupta: "Green terrorism. Environment warriors from the West have turned India into a conservation site", *Sunday*, 5/7/1992.

[11] This is a re-translation of the Dutch translation given in *Internationale Samenwerking*, 1/1993.

Critics will certainly attack the element of cultural relativism in the unconditional respect accorded to aboriginal "social institutions and law systems". Dr. Ambedkar fought all his life against the indigenous social institution of untouchability, and for its replacement with more universal social norms, including the concept of equality which he discovered in foreign law systems. Adivasi activists will consider me a spoilsport for bringing up such a comparison, but it is not misplaced in this context. When Kenya was given independence, the national leader Jomo Kenyatta at once pleaded for the continuation or restoration of the custom of female circumcision, a most painful and degrading mutilation, as a matter of national heritage and pride. One has to strike a balance between respect for traditional custom and certain basic universal norms: certain customs have simply been misunderstood and deserve to be respected as part of the newly-won freedom of indigenous peoples, while others are genuinely unacceptable by genuinely universal standards, e.g. female circumcision and untouchability. To be sure, I am not aware of any hidden agenda among Adivasi movements to reinstate inhuman practices, but definitions are supposed to take all eventualities into account.

Secondly, the Hindus of Pakistan and Bangladesh should explore to what extent they come under this definition of "indigenous community", even of "indigenous nation" considering the two-nation theory on which the separation of these countries from India was based. Berbers, Copts and other pre-arabization minorities should do the same: Islam was definitely imposed on them, either as their religion through forcible conversion, or as a regime by external forces.

Thirdly, there is a circularity in the provision that the indigenous peoples themselves can decide who is indigenous. Aryans are indigenous to India, so they can decide that they are indigenous; they can even decide that the tribals are not. Fact is that a descriptive statement like: "this community is indigenous", is not a matter to be "decided". It is a matter to be determined by universally valid methods of history and anthropology, methods which can be applied by the non-indigenous as well as the indigenous.

So, let us find out for ourselves who is indigenous and who is not. The one question that has not been posed, and one that only becomes relevant if one chooses to classify India's inhabitants as "aboriginals" and "invaders", is whether the tribals themselves are truly "original inhabitants" in the first place. The question may sound sacrilegious to those who champion the *Adivasi* label, but it

is their own stand that makes the question pertinent.

In a recent study, a Flemish Jesuit working in Chhotanagpur has looked into the migration history of the Oraon, Santal and Munda tribes. Father J. Van Troy writes that the tribal language Oraon, spoken in Chhotanagpur, is closely related to Brahui, spoken in Baluchistan, and that influences by Uralic languages on their common ancestor-language, proto-Dravidian, proves that they were originally spoken in the extreme North-West of the Indian Subcontinent. In fact, the common agglutinative structure of these language families has suggested a genetic link (compare the first impression one gets of both Tamil and Hungarian: long words with few consonant clusters and clear vowels with the emphasis on the first syllable), but an influence through contact is not generally acknowledged.

He relates how, millennia later, the Oraons have a tradition describing their wanderings from that area to their present habitat on the Ranchi plateau (in contrast to the Vedic people, who had no tradition of a migration even a few centuries after their so-called invasion).[12] If Baluchistan is taken to be no longer a part of India, the Oraon are among the first to come up with a native tradition that traces their origins to an area outside India. In that case, the Oraons are guests in the land of the real aboriginals. As we have seen in ch.2.8, their tradition that they came from the west via the Narmada river fits into the increasingly accepted theory that the Dravidians as a whole came from southern Iran.

Father Van Troy then relates how the Austric-speaking peoples, speaking Mundari and Santali, also had a migration history. In perhaps 600 BC, they may have moved uphill from the Azamgarh area (Uttar Pradesh) to escape from the expanding Magadhan kingdom which was deforesting the Gangetic plain. In fact, there is no indication that the Austrics ever lived farther west than they do today, but if they really have a tradition that they came from a few hundred kilometres to the west, there is no harm in accepting it. A few centuries later, they were pushed from the western part of the Ranchi plateau to the southern part, not by the ugly Aryans but by the technologically more advanced non-Adivasis, the Oraon immigrants who were invading the area from the west.

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[12] J. Van Troy s.j.: *The Prehistoric Context of the Coming of the Mundas to the Ranchi Plateau. A Review.* In *Sevartham* vol.15, 1990, p.27 ff.

But that does not mean that the Gangetic plain was the Mundas' "original" home. Their collective memory may simply not reach back more than three millennia, which already is not bad, and the Azamgarh area may have been just another station on their wanderings which had started elsewhere. The Munda languages, along with Nicobarese, belong to the Austric language family, of which the dominant members are Khmer and Vietnamese. The distance between the quantitative heartland of Austro-Asiatic and the Munda habitat is hardly smaller than that between Panjab, habitat of the Vedic people, and South Russia, their presumed original homeland.

That the Vietnam area was the Mundas' original homeland, is also rendered probable by the archaeologically attested cultural connection between that area and the Neolithic culture of the eastern Gangetic plain. Father Van Troy approvingly quotes Prof. H.D. Sankalia: "The Eastern Neolithic Culture of India was partly received from the Far East." A related Munda culture was probably the Bronze age culture of 2300 BC in Thailand. The Chinese language has a substantial number of Austric loan-words, probably including the "cyclical" characters, two series (of 10 and of 12) of numerals used for counting hours, compass directions etc.: a fundamental part of Chinese cosmology and the calendar. Those who want to give the Austric peoples of India a proud heritage, will find more of it in China and Indochina than in India. On the other hand, biologically the Indian Austrics are much closer to the other Indians than to their linguistic cousins in the east.

In a leading German periodical of physical anthropology, a team of Western and Indian experts demonstrate with detailed figures of comparative physical characteristics that the Indian tribals are a fairly heterogeneous population, due to different origins and different degrees of admixture. They write: "Whereas the now Dravidian-speaking tribals of Central and South India can be considered to be descendents of the original inhabitants of India, who gave up their original languages in favour of Dravidian, Tibeto-Chinese speaking tribals (Northeast India) and Austro-Asiatic speaking ones (East India) immigrated into India since ancient historical times. Most likely they came in several waves from Southern China (Tibeto-Chinese speakers) and from Southeast Asia (Austro-Asiatic speakers) respectively. Without doubt these immigrating groups met with ancient Indian populations, which were living al-

ready on their migration routes, and thus one cannot exclude some cultural and also genetic contacts between immigrants and original inhabitants of India, at least at some places."[13]

It is not even certain that the ancestors of the present tribes are the authors of the attested Neolithic cultures. In Sankalia's words: "It is an ***unanswered*** but interesting question whether any of the Aboriginal tribes of these regions were the authors of the Neolithic culture."[14]

Even the archaeological attestation of cultural similarities spanning the millennia from the Neo- or Paleolithic till today, does not constitute proof of ethnic continuity. If today a Brahmin priest mutters Sanskrit verses over a Shivalingam, we are asked not to infer that the Brahmins' ancestors were the original practitioners of this cult attested in Harappa, but on the contrary that the proto-Brahmin Aryan barbarians "stole" this cult from the original Harappan Shiva worshippers. By the same reasoning, scenarios of assimilation and inculturation could explain how Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic invaders gradually adopted an earlier truly "aboriginal" religious or cultural habit.

Pre-Harappan cave dwellings contain cult elements which are still found in Hinduism today. For instance, in a Palaeolithic site in the Siddhi district of Madhya Pradesh (10,000 to 8,000 BC), a Mother Goddess shrine has been found, which contains the same symbols which tribal and shaktic cults use till today, complete with the same geometric figures —squares, circles, swastikas and esp. triangles (from which more complex *yantras* are a later development), that are part of the iconography of goddesses like Durga even in urban Hinduism.[15] Judging from cave paintings, the tiger goddess is also of pre-Harappan date.

A Flemish expert on tribal culture told me of a similar but even older finding in the Bastar area. Interestingly, when the painted triangular stone was dug up, the Gond guide at once started to do puja before it (just as villagers do when some idol is found, no matter what its state of erosion etc.). He also claimed that the re-

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[13] H. Walter et al.: "Investigations on the variability of blood group polymorphisms among sixteen tribal populations from Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, India", in *Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie*, Band 79 Heft 1 (1992).

[14] H.D. Sankalia: *Indian Archaeology Today*, Delhi 1979, p.22, p.61. Emphasis added.

[15] Pupul Jayakar: *The Earth Mother*, p.20-22.

port could not be published in India because the Brahminical establishment refused to acknowledge the continuity of their own religion with the despised tribal culture: if true, this would be a sad case of Hindus hurting their own national interest by haughtily disowning and alienating the tribal component of their culture and society.[16]

The inference that the tribals of Central India, who continue the practices attested since more than 10 millennia, are therefore the original inhabitants of that area, is just as good as the inference that the Brahmins administering worship to the age-old Shivalingam must *ipso facto* be natives too: the Bhils and Gonds may, just as is alleged of the Brahmins, have adopted a pre-existent cult. If we strictly apply the logic that "proves" the Aryans' immigration from outside, we can no longer take the "Aboriginals"' nativeness for granted, at least not in the present state of knowledge. Nevertheless, let us now stop this exercise of treating the "Adivasis" the way their self-appointed guardians, the missionaries, are treating the "Aryans". It is probable enough that not only culturally, the Central-Indian tribals display a continuity with the local culture since hoary antiquity, but genetically too, they must be related to those Goddess worshippers of over ten millennia ago.

The alternative would be that they immigrated, encountered the Goddess-worshipping Aboriginals, killed and replaced them, and then took over the religious culture of the annihilated people. That is not logical, and it is better to assume that even if some tribals were new-comers, they can only have assimilated the local culture by co-existing and mingling with the natives. At least in part they must be the physical progeny of the ultimate natives. So, they really are "Adivasis". But the point is: by that reckoning, so are the Dravidians and the "Aryans", even if we assume the immigration of their languages millennia ago. Except for a few families in the Muslim elite who pride themselves on their pure Arabic, Persian or Turkish descent, all Indians are "Adivasis".

3.5. Mixed races

There has been a fairly complete mixture of blood among the different populations of India. Nowhere is there a clear break in the racial continuum. The "Adivasis" are not markedly different in

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[16] Jan Van Alphen: personal communication, May 1992.

physical features from the surrounding populations, in the sense in which South African whites clearly stand out from South African blacks. The speakers of "Aryan" languages are much more similar to the Dravidian-speakers than to the "Aryan"-speakers of Europe. The Mundas are much more similar to the surrounding "Aryan" population than to their linguistic cousins in Cambodia. Even if one sees history as essentially conflictive, and Indian history as essentially that of a conflict between native and invading cultures, nobody can claim to be pure descendents of one of the parties in this conflict.

Even when tribes form endogamous groups, this does not in practice lead to a total stop on inter-breeding with other ethnic groups. Often there are loopholes that allow at least the men to bring in partners from the outside. Sometimes there are fusions of tribes, in some cases illustrated by the heraldic fusion of their totem animals. Sometimes, when one tribe conquers another, the women are taken as booty and used for procreation; the resulting children may remain second-class tribe members, but gradually the distinction vanishes. On some festive occasions, "transgressive sacrality" allows the breach of taboos on exogamous sexual relations. While the practice of endogamy, common among tribal cultures worldwide, has a conserving effect on the genetic distinctiveness of a population, it cannot stop racial mixing completely.

Some Christian lobbyists are dead against "the impression that all aboriginal claims of racial integrity are completely obliterated by the extent of intermarriage between Aryans and non-Aryans", notably Father M. Hermanns, in his article *The Hindu and the Tribal*, written in the mid-1950s as a contribution to a joint reply by Church dignitaries to the Niyogi Commission Report, which had exposed the missionary machinations in the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh. Writes he: "The fact that since the Vedic time, 'Aryans' and 'non-Aryans' intermingled by inter-marriage and that some Aboriginals were hinduized by acculturation does not at all nullify the other fact that the present Aboriginals are completely different in race and culture from the modern Hindu, but it confirms that these clear distinctions between them have existed since time immemorial."[17]

Of course, intermingling of races does nullify any situation of being "completely different in race". Father Hermanns' seeming

[17] *Truth Shall Prevail, Reply to Niyogi Committee*, p.251.

contempt for logic does not nullify logic. The racial mingling of all the different components of India's population (if ever they existed in "pure" form at all) is an incontrovertible fact, evident to anyone who cares to observe the physical types present in an Indian city or village. As for the cultural mingling, Father Hermanns seems to think that there was a one-way process by which tribals were "hinduized"; but even (or rather, especially) the Aryan-invasionists agree that many elements of "Hindu" religion are originally tribal, most conspicuously the animal-gods like Hanuman and Ganesha (whose statues were smashed by Francis Xavier and other Christian missionaries, those big friends of the tribals).

Father Hermanns is particularly angry with a publication titled *The Adivasis — So-Called* by G.S. Ghurye, the great social scientist who had mapped the nasal indexes and skull indexes of all the communities in India. Speaking with authority, Ghurye rejects the motivated notion of "adivasi": as the article's title eloquently says, the so-called *adivasis* are not more *adivasi* than the targeted non-*adivasis*. Nearly all Indians are sons of the soil, and no one in India has any more right to call himself a true native than the next man.

The pure race is a myth, a myth that has become frowned upon thanks to Hitler's terrible use of this myth. But in India, interested quarters continue to use this myth of "racial integrity". Father Hermanns calls it an "aboriginal claim", though it is in fact a Western notion attributed *and taught* to the tribals by the missionaries, because this myth has been serving them so well for over a century now.

The Marxist scholar S.K. Chatterjee has made short work of the pure races in India, be they Aryan, Dravidian, Mongoloid or Austro-Asiatic. He called the Indian people a "mixed people, in blood, in speech and in culture".[18] He did believe in Aryans as newcomers to a pre-Aryan India, but understood that there had been not only a profound biological mixing, but also an "inevitable commingling of the legends and traditions of the two races united by one language, a commingling which has now become well-nigh inextricable".[19]

We may refer to another Christian working among the tribals to refute Father Hermanns' pure race theory. About the Bhil tribals in Rajasthan, P.A. Augustine writes: "The Bhils have long ceased to be

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[18] S.K. Chatterjee: *Indianism and Indian Synthesis* (Calcutta 1962), p.125.
[19] S.K. Chatterjee: *Indo-Aryan and Hindi* (1960), p.56, quoted in Mahadev Chakravarti: *The Concept of Rudra-Shiva through the Ages*, p.69.

a homogeneous people. In the course of millennia, various elements have fused to shape the community. During their long and tortuous history, other aboriginal groups which came under their sway have probably merged with them, losing their identity. One can see a wide range of physical types and complexion. The variation in complexion is very striking indeed, ranging between fair to quite dark-skinned... There is no consensus among scholars on the exact ethnic character of the Bhils. They have been alternatively described as proto-Australoid, Dravidian or Veddoid."[20] The same racial "impurity" counts for most Indians, tribal as well as non-tribal.

In an article, *Ethno-cultural diversities of India and national integration*, Ajit K. Danda surveys the racial classifications of the Indian people since Risley's race theories expounded on the occasion of the 1901 census.[21] Risley "failed to maintain a clear distinction between the biological and linguistic basis of race", and continued the existing confusion between *race* in the sense of "nation" or "language community" (in which loose sense the term was used until after World War 2), and *race* in the strictly biological sense.

Already in 1931, B.S. Guha set the record straight, and "demonstrated with evidence that the racial groups in India do not coincide with linguistic or cultural divisions of the country". Danda adds a map of the distribution of skull measurements, which is enlightening, though disappointing for those who believe skull properties are revealing. The dolichocephalic predominates generally, and most strongly in Kashmir, Panjab, the Hindi belt and Andhra Pradesh. The more-brachycephalic type is most present in Gujarat and Karnataka, in Bengal and esp. among the Tibetan border populations. The "Jharkhand" tribal belt is not a unit standing apart from the rest, but is divided in parts which have the same index as their non-tribal surroundings. The same thing counts for the North-Eastern tribal belt, where dolichocephalics, brachycephalics and mixed types each predominate in some area, with little regard to the tribal/non-tribal divide.

Nevertheless, Father Hermanns goes on to assert: "Scholars dealing with the physical anthropology of India unanimously admit

[20] P.A. Augustine: *The Bhils of Rajasthan* (Indian Social Institute, Delhi 1986), p.2-3.

[21] In Rasheeduddin Khan: *Composite Culture of India and National Integration*, pp.195-231.

that there are different racial types among the Indian population which are clearly distinguishable." Certainly, and the same thing counts for most big enough populations: the Native Americans, or the population of China, or the Europeans; yet, that is not accepted as a ground for a racial division in "aboriginals" and others.

The average Norwegian is different from the average Spaniard, taller and with a lighter colour of skin and hair; yet, there are dark-haired Norwegians and there are fair and tall Spaniards. The racial difference exists as a statistical category, but not in the sense that anyone can claim "racial integrity". The Basques, the only ones in Western Europe to speak a non-Indo-European language, are not buttressing their demands for cultural and political rights with any racial claims of being "adivasis", in a genetic sense. In terms of blood type, the Basques have a sharp statistical tendency to Rhesus-negative factor, but this long-unsuspected distinctive trait has not yet been invoked as a biological justification for their nationalism. Even if some physical features have a higher statistical incidence among certain populations than among others, it is quite wrong to speak of a Basque race or a German race or a Jewish race (in spite of the statistical physical feature of the "Jewish nose" so prominent in Nazi cartoons).[22] Similarly, it is inappropriate to speak of a Dravidian race, an Aryan race, an Adivasi race.

It is time to terminate the use of the racist and mischievous term "Adivasi", unless one is prepared to use it as a designation of over 99% of the Indian population.

3.6. The tribal - "Hindu" continuum

There may now be attempts to justify the term "adivasi" not as a genetic but as a cultural term. We may agree that genetically, "Aryans", "Dravidians" and "Adivasis", even assuming that at one time they were separate races, are so mixed that no one can claim to be a pure member of any of these components of India's population. Then at least we might distinguish between imported Aryan-Dravidian culture and native *Adivasi* culture?

Such distinction would not testify to a great admiration for Indian culture: all its literate traditions, including most of its classi-

[22] The "Jewish nose" is not a "Semitic" but a Central-Asian racial trait, as most Ashkenazi (Central-European, Yiddish-speaking) Jews were descendents of the Khazars, a Turkic people converted to Judaism in about 800 AD. In anti-Jewish pamphlets, the Jews are sometimes called "neo-Khazars".

cal dance and music, would come under the "invader culture" heading, and only the culture of hill-dwellers and forest-dwellers would be native and authenticaly Indian. In that case, the invaders could hardly be described as "barbarians", considering their cultural achievements. By contrast, the authentically Indian left-over culture would, though not "inferior" by any absolute standard, certainly be rather limited due to the constraints which forest life places upon the development of literate tradition and higher culture. Truly Indian culture would be confined to within the parameters of tribal life, and all the literate and advanced culture would be an imported culture.

But like the genetic difference, the cultural cleavage between forest society and urban Hindu culture also disappears when held in the light of closer analysis. There is not only the well-known process of "sanskritization" (as well as an earlier process of "dravidization" which some ethnologists now postulate), by which less prestigious groups, like the tribes, imitate the customs of more prestigious groups like Brahmins and Rajputs. There is the much more fundamental presence of so-called tribal elements in the middle of developed Hindu culture.

An expert on tribal culture has told me that Indian classical music is nothing but a more developed stage of tribal music. Computer analysis of the *ragas* left no doubt that the rhythmic schemes etc. were developed from the more simple forms still in use in tribal music. He also told me that his earliest work had been on the mutual influencing of tribal and Hindu culture; but that he had now given up the whole concept of "influence" between those two, as there could fundamentally not be made a distinction.[23] He does not question the Aryan Invasion, but emphasizes that native Indian culture has continued all through the millennia of commingling and "sanskritization". Tribal culture is an instance or a stage of Hindu culture, and Hindu culture in the sense of Sanskritic culture is, on the whole, but a more literate development of tribal culture (even if urban upper-caste Hindus do not like to admit it).

In the field of religion, this continuity between "tribal" and "Hindu" is striking enough. By most accounts working from the assumption of the Aryan Invasion, a number of Vishnu's incarnations, especially the animal and half-animal ones, have been incor-

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[23] Jan Van Alphen, personal communication, May 1992, with reference to the fieldwork of the Belgian scholar Armand Neven.

porated from tribal religion. By the same reasoning, Lord Ganesha is of course an *adivasi* contribution to the Hindu pantheon. So are his parents, Shiva and Parvati, eventhough they are depicted as white, the skin colour of those ugly Aryan invaders (*Gauri*, one of Parvati's epithets, means "fair-skinned").[24] Shiva Maheshwara, the great god, would have been the central native Indian deity, while Vishnu would only be a "creature of the Brahmins", cunningly incorporating as "incarnations" native deities like the boar (Varaha) and the man-lion (Narasimha). The god Brahma, of course, cannot hide his origin as a creature of these cunning Brahmins who did nothing but deceive people: that is why there is hardly one temple where he is worshipped (Pushkar, in the original Brahmavarta, now in Rajasthan). But for the rest, most of the Hindu gods and especially goddesses were native, "pre-Aryan".

Every positive development in Indian history is nowadays explained as a contribution of the natives in reaction against the imposed Aryan culture. Even the Buddha, who preached his *Arya Dharma* with its four *arya-satyani* (noble truths) and its *arya-ashtangika-marga* (noble eightfold path) in an Aryan language, must perforce be described as a "native". True, he was born in a royal family at a time when the "Aryans" were supposed to be the rulers, who had recently snatched the Bihar area from the *Adivasis*. In fact, his family was of impeccable Ikshvaku (an Aryan dynasty, to which Rama also belonged) pedigree, as later Buddhist writers would proudly proclaim. His non-violence was as different as you can get from the bloody *Shaktic* worship offered to "native" goddesses like Kali and Durga, and his typically monkish distrust of women was not exactly an expression of the much-touted matriarchal character of aboriginal India. But the Buddha was a good guy, and therefore everyone agrees that his teachings must have been pre-Aryan and a revolution directed against the ugly Aryan Brahmins. His induction in the Avatar series of Vishnu was just another Brahminical trick to mollify the rebellious natives.

The other avataras, Rama and Krishna, were always described as dark-skinned and must therefore also be non-Aryan heroes who were deified by the cunning Brahmins in order to fool the natives.

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[24] It is possible that Parvati's "whiteness" has nothing to do with human skin-colour, but is merely the natural attribute of a goddess symbolizing the (snow-clad) mountains, the abode of the yogis including her consort Shiva. If Shiva, from whose hair the Ganga springs, is white, it may also be a reference to the snow-clad Himalaya.

Except for the Brahmin warrior Parashurama, it seems that Vishnu has so far been denied the honour of an "Aryan" birth. And come to think of it: since Ravana, that black-skinned hero of our neo-Dravidian *sons of the soil*, was also a Brahmin, even Parashurama's brahminhood may not guarantee his Aryan purity either.

So, in Hindu religion, hardly any imported elements remain. Even granting the Aryan Invasion theory, the situation is that the Aryan books, the Vedas, have a position like that of a constitutional monarch: many things are done in his name, but he has no effective power. The centre stage is taken by doctrines which are considered non-Vedic and "adopted from the natives who started re-asserting themselves after some centuries of Aryan rule". *Karma*, *yoga*, reincarnation, *tapas*, *brahmacharya*, *murti-puja*, are all doctrines and practices which nearly define Hinduism and yet are said to be "native" and "pre-Aryan". So in fact, as per the Invasionists' own theories, Hinduism is the pre-Aryan, tribal-cum-Harappan religion, only formulated in Aryan-based (but Dravidian-influenced) tongues like Sanskrit and the different Prakrits.

Not only the urban and agricultural populations of the North-West have been brought into the "Aryan fold", but many tribals in the rest of India as well. Archaeological findings suggest that except for the North-West, all of India was still in the Stone Age in 1000 BC: all these tribal populations were integrated in a more advanced civilization. They form the bulk of the Hindu population, and their aboriginality is unquestionable.

The Marxist historian D.D. Kosambi gives the despised Brahmin caste a lot of the credit for this process of integration: "The respect showed by Ashoka and his successors to the leading Brahmins of the day was due to the important new mission that the caste had already begun to fulfil in education, culture, maintenance of a class structure in society, unification and absorption of originally irreconcilable groups, and in the general spread of an agricultural society."[25] Apart from the Maurya state machinery which developed trade and infrastructure, Kosambi gives the credit for civilizing the tribals to "the pioneer Brahmins who, like Bavari, penetrated the wilderness with at most a handful of cattle and a couple of disciples", and to "the Brahmin *agrahara* settlers with whom kings liked to seed the wilderness not yet brought under the

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[25] D.D. Kosambi: *Culture and Civilization of Ancient India*, pp.166-167.

plough but ripe for opening up".[26]

And this is how it was done, according to Kosambi: "The tribe as a whole turned into a new peasant *jati* caste-group, generally ranked as Shudras, with as many as possible of the previous institutions (including endogamy) brought over. The Brahmins here acted as pioneers in undeveloped localities; they first brought plough agriculture to replace slash-and-burn cultivation, or food-gathering. New crops, knowledge of distant markets, organization of village settlements and trade also came with them. As a result, kings or kings-to-be invited Brahmins, generally from the distant Gangetic basin, to settle in unopened localities... The Brahmin often preserved tribal or local peasant *jati* customs and primitive lore in some special if modified form... The general medieval rule is that each *jati* caste, guild, clan, family and locality had its own legal customs which must be consulted before the king's judges could give a decision... The rigid Arthashastra judicature which overrode all other usage disappeared soon after the Mauryas. This procedure enabled Indian society to be formed out of many diverse and even discordant elements, with the minimum use of violence."[27]

As a Marxist, Kosambi regrets this local autonomy as well as the religious dimension to these local customs, which he considers unprogressive; but he does justice to the historical fact that numerous tribal groups (the genetic and cultural cousins of the Santals, Gonds and Oraons) were effectively integrated in Hindu society, with loss of their *Vanavasi* lifestyle but with respect for their traditions and communal identity.

3.7. Animism transformed

The reason why literate Brahminism and illiterate 'animism' could be integrated so succesfully, is that there exists a profound continuity between the two. Ethnologists have long defined Hinduism as "animism transformed by philosophy": a very interesting description indeed. The full formula has been given as "animism more or less transformed by philosophy, or to condense the epigram, as magic tempered by metaphysics".[28] It echoes what S.R. Rao said about the Harappans' religion, "ranging from very ele-

[26] D.D. Kosambi: *op.cit.*, p.182.
[27] D.D. Kosambi: *op.cit.*, p.172.
[28] Quoted with approval by Premchand Roychand: *Ethnic Elements in Ancient Hinduism*, p.1, from *The American Review*, 1966, p.18 ff.

vated philosophical and ethical concepts down to a crude animism".[29]

Hinduism is a *Sanatana Dharma*, an "eternal value system"; because it has not broken with the most primitive stages of human culture, it is continuous with these. And at the same time, it has evolved, it has transformed itself with the faculty of reason. Hinduism definitely is "animism transformed by philosophy". Therefore, there is no break between the most refined forms of philosophical Hinduism, such as Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism, and the more primitive forms of "animism" which are in evidence in the villagers' cults of *grama devatas*, and indeed in the tribal forms of religion.

It is obvious that such "animism transformed by philosophy" can integrate into itself both the "animism" of the Dravidian, Austric and Austronesian tribals, and the "primitive nature worship" attributed to the Vedic Aryan barbarians. Mind you, according to the prevalent description, the Vedic Aryans were as much "tribals" as the Gonds and Mundas. Though the latest theories of Aryan dispersion admit that as early as 4000 BC, the Proto-Indo-Europeans must have had organized agriculture (albeit less advanced than in the Eastern Meditterranean), which suggests a more advanced social structure than pure tribalism, their religion could, with some justice and some stretching of word-meanings, be described as a kind of animism.

In fact, if we consider the arguments brought up by the Christian missionaries in their manifesto *Truth Shall Prevail, Reply to the Niyogi Committee*, to prove that the tribals are not Hindus, we must conclude that the Vedic Aryans were not Hindus either.[30] The missionaries argue that the tribals believe in a Creator, that they eat beef, that they do not worship the *lingam*, that they practise ancestor worship, that they believe in an eternal soul but not in reincarnation, and that the said beliefs and practices are in stark contradiction with Hinduism. Exactly the same characteristics have been attributed to the Vedic culture by accomplished scholars.

In one of the several Vedic creation myths, a process of creation is conducted by the Creator *Prajapati*. It is only later that the more advanced "Hindu" (including Buddhist and Jain) notion of a permanent but constantly transforming universe was developed,—

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[29] quoted in Van Lysebeth: *Tantra*, p.19.
[30] *op.cit.*, p.252-261.

a notion upheld by modern physics, which teaches that "the universe is a constant" (with laws of preservation ensuring that the sum-total of mass-energy remains the same), and that even the "big bang" is not a moment of creation out of nothing, but merely a moment of transformation of the universe from an extremely condensed state to the present state.[31] The belief in *creatio ex nihilo*, shared by primitive tribals and the Vedic Aryans, and by Christian theologians in defiance of modern science, is still acceptable to Hindus as merely one of the possible viewpoints, even if a fairly primitive one.

Whether the Vedic Aryans ate beef is a hotly debated point. At least, all Hindu-baiters are fond of asserting this. It is certain that the cow was a sacred animal to the authors of the Vedas, but it may be precisely because of that sacredness that the cow was sacrificed and eaten on special occasions. Indeed, in his chapter on whether Vedic Brahmins ate beef, Dr. Ambedkar quotes from a Marathi publication of P.V. Kane, the great expert on Dharma Shastra: "It was not that the cow was not sacred in Vedic times, it was because of her sacredness that it is ordained in the Vajasaneyi Samhita that beef should be eaten."[32] At any rate, by modern consensus the Vedic Aryans ate beef, and if the tribals are not Hindus on this ground, then neither were the Vedic Aryans.

The Vedic Aryans are often quoted as expressing their disapproval of those people who "worship the phallus" (*shishna-devah*), which should prove their enmity towards the Shivalingam-worshipping Harappans.[33] The missionary manifesto itself develops the (untenable) position that this "perversion" of Shaivite-Shaktic *lingam* worship was developed by the decadent urban civilization of Mohenjo-Daro with its population of Dravidian invaders, and that it had not contaminated the innocent tribals, like the Mundas, the Gonds, the Oraons — and, we may add, the Vedic Aryans.

The Vedic Aryans believed that after death the soul goes to heaven, much like the Christians and like the tribals in the mission-

[31] The inventor of the Big Bang theory in the 1920s, Prof. Lemaître of Leuven University (who, incidentally, was a Catholic priest), correctly insisted that the Big Bang did not *create* the universe, but merely *transformed* it from one state to another.

[32] P.V. Kane: *Dharma Shastra Vichar*, p.180; quoted by Dr. Ambedkar: *The Untouchables*, ch.11, in *Writings and Speeches*, vol.7., p.324.

[33] e.g. Van Lysebeth: *Tantra*, p.338. The reference is to Rgveda 7:21:5 and 10:99:3. Ralph T.H. Griffith translates: "the lewd" and "the lustful demons" (*The Hymns of the Rgveda*).

aries' description. They had no developed notion of reincarnation, so by the missionaries' definition they were not Hindus. At any rate, there is no law anywhere that binds a Hindu to belief in reincarnation. Hinduism is not a belief system.

A corollary of the belief in the dead ancestors' survival in heaven (as opposed to reincarnation) was a form of ancestor worship, which the Indian tribals have in common with most tribal and non-tribal cultures before the spread of Christianity (which abolished ancestor worship, among other reasons because most ancestors had not received baptism and were therefore suffering eternal punishment in hell). The Vedic ancestor worship survives in mild form in contemporary Hinduism: many newly wedded couples go to the husband's ancestral home to do some *puja* for the ancestors. By the missionaries' standards, this custom stamps all the Hindus concerned as non-Hindus. The point is that in its long evolution, humanity has gone through different stages and developed different views and practices: in their essence, all of these are taken along in *Sanatana Dharma*.

For tactical reasons, the missionaries and other enemies of Hindu society use several different and conflicting definitions of the word "Hindu", depending on the needs of the situation. Thus, when Hindus say they feel threatened in their homeland by the machinations of the pan-Islamic forces, this fear is ridiculed on the ground that "Hindus form 85% of India's population and can never be threatened by any minority". But on other occasions, "the Hindus should not pretend to be the sole bearers of India's composite culture", because tribals are not Hindus, the Scheduled Castes are not Hindus, nor the Sikhs, nor the Lingayats, nor the Jains and Buddhists, nor even the Arya Samaj or the Ramakrishna Mission, nor the Shaivas and Shaktas. It is doubtful that Hindus can even claim to be the "majority community".

In a missionary paper available in the library of our Theology faculty, I once read that "Shiva is not a Hindu god". No, he isn't, a Christian theology student from Kerala explained to me: Shiva was an aboriginal god of the Indus civilization, which was not a Hindu civilization. Actually, there is no consensus that the Indus civilization was aboriginal, since the "Dravidian Harappans" are said to have come from the Mediterranean; but at any rate they are not considered Aryans. And therefore, it is often said that all those elements in Indian culture that can be traced to Harappan culture,

are "not Hindu". So, after having shown that the Vedic Aryans were not Hindus, we now learn that the cultural elements contributed by the Indus civilization ("which the Aryans destroyed") were "un-Aryan and therefore not Hindu" either. And as the third contributor to Hindu tradition, the tribal element, is also argued not to be Hindu, we must conclude that Hinduism does not exist. Good riddance.

It is indeed one of the big intellectual challenges before Hindu thinkers to come up with a balanced and effective definition, or co-ordinated range of definitions, of terms like Hinduism and Sanatana Dharma. Sentimentalisms like Mahatma Gandhi's: "Every good man is a Hindu", will not do (if only because many people whose badness is well-attested, are also Hindus). But the above-mentioned "animism transformed by philosophy" points the way: it takes both the continuity with the hoary heritage and the advanced philosophical developments into account. Along similar lines, the developments of caste system as a temporary phenomenon partly determined by non-religious factors, yet also being one of the possible expressions of a typically Hindu outlook on worldly matters, should be integrated into such an account of what Hinduism is.

The extent to which tribals are Hindus, should be clarified with the help of the larger concept of *Paganism* and the territorial element which sets Hinduism apart from other Pagan traditions. Though I have criticized Veer Savarkar's definition of Hindu as "one for whom Hindusthan is both fatherland and holyland" elsewhere (see ch.3.10), it has its merits: in the common usage of the term Hindu, there is an undeniable link with the geographical unit India.[34] But while the distinctive element is geographical, as in Savarkar's definition, the important common element is ideological: even the most primitive animism has an ideological presupposition which becomes clear when we contrast it with Islam and Christianity, viz. its non-exclusiveness, its non-dependence on a specific historical revelation, its potential universality, its rootedness in the common experience of reality.

The attempt by the missionaries, in their reply to the Niyogi Committee Report, to paint "tribal religion" as separate from "Hindu religion", should not make us forget that "both" these religions are equally doomed and evil in the Christian view. The missionaries,

[34] Reference is to my *Ayodhya and After* (Voice of India, Delhi 1991), ch.14.5.

who champion the rights of the tribals "to freely choose their own religion like adults" (i.e. to convert), picture them nonetheless as more "innocent" than the Hindus with their their depraved practices, such as worship of elephant-gods and tiger-goddesses, phallus worship, demonic teachings that man is consubstantial with God, and literate polemics against Christianity. They also attribute to the tribals a kind of primeval monotheism focused on a vague, unvisualized, non-anthropomorphic cosmic force (even while denying the traits of monotheism which Swami Dayanand had claimed to perceive behind the "polytheistic appearances" of the Vedas).

Short, the missionaries paint the tribals as almost-Christians, with only the Gospel information on the historical Christ missing: "Despite the inferences of the Niyogi Report, the Aborigines *are* capable of recognizing the inner harmony between their beliefs and the Christian faith. It is their monotheistic faith, as we have noted, and their belief in reward and punishment for good and evil deeds, that have prepared them for a natural assimilation to the Christian faith."[35]

We will not go into the untruths which are implied in the missionaries' picture of a common "tribal" theology among the different tribes, whose world-views may differ as widely as those of the different sects of Sanskritic Hinduism (monists and dualists, theists and atheists, etc.). As for their postulated monotheism, let one example suffice: according to the Christian social scientist Joseph Troisi, the Santals have no less than ten categories of deities, from ancestral spirits through village deities to the well-known Puranic Hindu deities. If non-tribal Hindus are "polytheists" when they worship Shiva or a *grama devata*, then the same label applies to the tribals.

True, they have a supreme deity whom they call *Thakur*, "Lord": exactly like most polytheists, who have a supreme unifier at the apex of their heavenly hierarchy.[36] All polytheists have a notion of ultimate unity, which is however too elevated to meddle in

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[35] *Truth Shall Prevail*, p. 267.

[36] J. Troisi: *Tribal Religion*, p.75-79. The writer consistently uses the term "Santal pantheon", which is polytheistic enough. On the other hand, he also calls the ten classes of deities "spirits", rather than "gods", apparently because of a concern not to endanger the myth of Santal monotheism. According to André Béteille's foreword, Troisi "does not have any theoretical axe to grind", but his over-all objectivity does make a few concessions to Church politics.

human affairs, a job which "He" leaves to a host of lesser gods: just like the God of the Catholics has the Virgin Mary, the Saints and the Angels to answer the worshippers' prayers (which is why the Protestants condemn Catholicism as polytheism in thin disguise). Especially Hinduism has been read by many scholars as teaching an ultimate unity behind the diversity of divine characters: I have once heard a more sympathizing Catholic Father say that Hinduism is not "polytheism" but "polymorphous theism". But even less philosophical polytheists usually have a supreme deity who is a *deus otiosus*, a god who has gone on holiday after setting the wheel of creation in motion. If the recognition of an ultimate unity behind the diverse pantheon constitutes monotheism and not polytheism, then polytheism has hardly ever existed, if at all. If the Indian tribals count as monotheists, then all of humanity has always been monotheist, and there was never any need for Moses, Saint Paul and Mohammed to reveal the one true God to the "monotheist" worshippers of the Golden Calf, of the Greek and Roman gods, or of the Arab goddesses Al-Lat, Al-Uzza and Al-Manat.

The point is that all these nice things which missionaries now say about the tribals, are not good enough to lift them out of the category of the doomed Pagans. Many "heretics" have been condemned to the stake and to eternal hellfire for differences with Christian doctrine which were much smaller than, for instance, the tribals' ignorance of Christ. In both Catholic and Protestant countries, the tribals' practice of propitiating rites for ghosts and spirits would have cost them death at the stake for witchcraft. Whatever differences the missionaries may claim to have discovered between tribal religions and Sanskritic Hinduism, are all insignificant when considered in the light of their common Pagan-ness.

The falseness of the claim that tribal religion is close to Christianity while Hinduism is a depraved Paganism totally different from both Christianity and tribal religion, comes out when the missionaries are not addressing the tribal, but the unmistakably Hindu public. Then, the tune changes completely: there is plenty of wisdom in Hinduism, which has prepared the Hindus for Christ, just like Plato had prepared the Greeks for Christ. Then, there is a streak of monotheism in the Vedas and in the Bhakti movement, a streak of messianic expectation in the *Vishnu Dashavatar* doctrine, a budding notion of Salvation in the doctrine of *Moksha* or *Nirvana*. As Raimundo Panikkar and Bede Griffiths say, there is a "hidden Christ

in Hinduism".

The general strategy now seems to be that all prospective groups of converts are told that Christianity is very nearby. In the past, they were told that the gap between their religion and the one true faith is extremely deep, but that they should hasten to make the jump for the sake of their eternal salvation. Today, there is a less confrontationist and more seductionist approach, and if necessary, the condemnation of other religions is modified in a "divide and rule" sense: not the prospective convert's own religion, but that of his neighbours is utterly objectionable, and so he should break with them to let his natural tendency towards Christianity develop. The prospective convert group is isolated from his cultural surroundings by the invention of a deep difference between the two, and then pulled closer to Christianity and finally absorbed. The means have changed, but the goal is still the same: collecting souls for the one true faith. The Christian insistence on a tribal-Hindu opposition is born from this soul greed more than from an observation of reality.

3.8. Tribal origin of caste

It is sometimes said that "the tribals, unlike the Hindus, have absolute equality and no caste system". Aboriginals all over the world have in fact begun to redefine their own cultural heritage in terms of the "noble savage", the idealized views which Romantic westerners had projected onto them. Thus, the *Gaia Atlas of First Peoples* quotes one "Pat Dodson, aborigine", as saying: "In traditional Aboriginal society, no one person was more important than another — all were parts of a whole. Growth and stature were measured by contribution, participation and accountability."[37] Some tribes (especially the most primitive ones, with little functional differentiation) may have come closer to this ideal than others, but in general, we can question this assertion on several counts. Equality is a very modern concept, and we may doubt that there exists a norm of "equality" even within a tribe, within a clan, within a family.

Feminists who eagerly believe that tribal women are equal with men, or even have a matriarchal position of dominance, will be dismayed to find that among tribals too, it is the men who go hunt-

[37] Julian Burger: *The Gaia Atlas of First Peoples*, p.50.

ing and the women who cook, and that women are expected to bear and raise children just like in ugly patriarchal societies. For instance: "Santal women must avoid a number of actions which men are permitted or even expected to do. Thus, women are not only barred from ploughing but it is also inauspicious for a Santal woman to even touch the plough. Women are also tabooed from roofing a house, striking with an axe, shooting an arrow,... playing on a flute, wearing male clothes. All these acts are, in varying degrees, suggestive of the male role. Such breaches would be regarded by the *bongas* [gods] as symbolic perversions."[38] Taboos concerning menstruation and childbirth are as common among tribals as among Jews or Brahmins.

Even if they have much less differentiation in social functions than the more advanced societies, the forest-dwelling family, clan and tribe have their hierarchies too. But let that pass: we will assume for now that within a tribe, there is equality, and no caste distinction. Does this mean that tribals do not acknowledge caste distinctions? This is often assumed: tribes have no caste identity and must create one upon acceptance into Hindu society.

For instance, in 1909, S.V. Ketkar wrote: "When a wild tribe of India got itself adopted into Hindu society by becoming endogamous and by accepting Brahmins as its priests and by worshipping Hindu gods, then it became a caste. When the tribe is in the process of transition, the rule of endogamy is very lax."[39] Ketkar had not visibly inquired into the truth of his presupposition, viz. that tribes have no caste identity.

Yet, he should have been alerted by his own description of caste practices elsewhere, both among tribals and in more advanced societies. Referring to tribals on the Pacific islands, he writes: "In the Mariami group it was the common belief that only the nobles were endowed with an immortal soul, and a nobleman who married a girl of the people was punished with death. In Polynesia the commoners were looked upon by the nobility as a different species of beings. Hence in the higher ranks the marriage was concluded only with persons of corresponding positions; and if in Tahiti, a woman of [rank] chose an inferior person as a husband, the children he had by her were killed."[40] These Polynesian

[38] J. Troisi: *op.cit.*, p.228.
[39] Ketkar: *History of Caste in India*, p.19.
[40] *ibid.*, p.29.

tribals had endogamous groups ("nobility" and "commoners"), or what Indians call *jatis*, castes. The relation between them was neither more egalitarian nor more flexible than that between Hindu castes, on the contrary: marriage outside the caste was not punished with mere expulsion, but with death.

A major part of anthropological literature is devoted to the study of endogamy and exogamy (*jati* and *gotra*) among tribal peoples. Endogamy was once a world-wide practice, and there is no reason to assume that Indian tribes are an exception.

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf writes about the Khova tribe in the North-East of India: "Their social organization is based on a system of exogamous clans distributed over all the ten villages. The tribe is strictly endogamous, and there is no intermarriage with any neighbouring tribe, such as the Akas and Mijis, whose life-style is similar, or the Sherdukpens, with whom the Khovas have long-standing ritual and economic relations."[41] This tribe, which has not been influenced by Brahminism, is an endogamous *jati* divided in exogamous *gotras*. It has specific relations with other tribes, so their endogamy cannot be attributed to complete isolation.

Incidentally, this tribe provides a living example of how tribes have been sanskritized since millennia, though in this case not by Brahmins: "Though the Khovas' traditional religion consists of the worship of numerous deities and nature spirits, which involves sacrifices of cattle, they are now influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and have begun to employ Lamas for the performance of rituals."

The Munda tribals not only practise tribal endogamy, but also observe a *jati* division within the tribe. Father Martin Topno s.j. observes: "The tribe is divided in two groups, which we may call sub-tribes. These groups do not intermarry." This caste division is justified with a tradition reminiscent of the explanations of caste given in the Manu Smrti, tracing the two castes to two eponymous brothers: "According to Munda tradition, the Mundas of the first group were the descendants of the elder brother — hence the name Marang Munda. But he incurred a social pollution, and so the Mundas of the other group do not intermarry with them."[42]

The two endogamous groups are subdivided in exogamous clans, called *kili*, which have a similar quasi-mythological origin:

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[41] Von Fürer-Haimendorf: *Tribes of India*, p.30.

[42] Martin Topno: "Pati and Parha: Social Structure of the Munda", *Sevartham* 1991 (1978), p.9.

"Munda clans are patrilineal, exogamous descent groups. Every Munda, whether he is a Christian or a non-Christian, must belong to the clan of his or her father. Each clan has a name — an animal or a plant or an object, but there are a number of clan names which do not seem to have any meaning, or at least their meaning has been completely forgotten. The members of the clan are believed to have descended from a common ancestor... Whether the Munda clans are totemistic or not is an open question. We hold, with the *Encyclopaedia Mundarica*, that the clans are natural and spontaneous in origin, or as the Mundas put it, *Jati-kilido Haramge sidaree baitada*, i.e., it is the Old One himself who made the clans."[43]

Undeniably, the Mundas have a system of rules of endogamy and exogamy. The caste distinctions also, like among non-tribal Hindus, involve taboos on inter-dining. Father Topno describes the deliberations of a *parha panchayat*, the inter-clan council, on the entry of a Munda's children by two non-Munda wives into the Munda tribe. The story proves first of all that a man can take a wife from outside the tribe (which is why the tribes are in a mixed-race continuum with their neighbours, a fact which would otherwise seem to contradict the strict rules of endogamy). But the wives cannot become fully participating tribe members, and their children too are not automatically tribe members: the *panchayat* has to decide on their acceptance.

This is the procedure: "The representative of the Surin clan... described the case and ultimately pleaded for adopting the six children into the Munda community. The *Raja* then asked the representatives of the Jojo clan to produce Maliya, his wives and children before the assembly. The two women were asked if they wanted their children to be taken into the community. They replied in the affirmative. Then they were told that, if their prayer was granted, their children could not take food from them after their marriage. To this also they agreed. The opinion of the Jojo *parha* representative was then sought. He consented to take them into the community and also agreed to grant them the right of burial in the clan burial ground. Maliya was then asked to pay the proper fine: a he-goat, three maunds of rice, twelve seers of pulse, spices, oil, salt etc. Food was prepared and all children along with Maliya went through the purificatory ritual. They then took food

[43] Martin Topno: *op.cit.*, p.10.

along with other members of the meeting. A resolution admitting the six children into the Munda community was then unanimously adopted."[44]

Father Topno comments: "There is one point which seems unduly harsh in this judgment of the *parha*. The two mothers, because they were non-Mundas, could not be co-opted into the Munda community. That was very hard for the domestic life of this particular family. There is no provision in the rules of the *parha* to co-opt non-Mundas into the Munda community." An endogamous group does not proselytize: if you do not belong to the group by descent, there is no way you can become a member. You can adopt a second nature by converting from one sect to another, but your first nature, your genetic belonging to a kinship group, cannot be changed.

Father Topno further informs us: "The main work of the *Parha Panchayat* is to watch over the interests of the clan and the tribe. Thus it judges and punishes first of all (a) cases of *mago*, which is incest or marriage within the clan; (b) cases of *jatibora*, which is when a Munda man marries a non-Munda woman; and (c) cases of *parjati*, which is when a Munda woman marries a non-Munda man. There are definite rules for each of these cases. In a case of *mago* or *jatibora*, the offending Munda can be re-admitted into the Munda community after paying the proper fine and going through the proper purificatory ritual. The case related above of Maliya Munda of the Jojo clan belongs to the *jatibora* category. But in the case of *parjati*, the offending Munda woman can never be re-admitted into the Munda community, she is lost forever to the community." This strong tradition of endogamy and exogamy rules is totally indigenous, and cannot seriously be attributed to any influence of Aryan invaders.

Christian missionaries have had to acknowledge and accomodate the attachment of tribals (and of, mostly low-caste, non-tribals) to their caste structures. In December 1891, Father Constant Lievens allowed one of his more zealous assistants, Father Walrave, to test the sincerity of 150 Munda converts and conversion candidates by asking them to inter-dine with other Christians who did not belong to the group with which they were allowed by tradition to share a meal. Only 20 people agreed to do so; the others

[44] M. Topno: *op.cit.*, p.16.

walked out, and 7,000 converts in the area defected. This test is known among Chhotanagpur Jesuits as "the Mistake".[45] It only confirmed the Jesuits in their general preference for an accomodating approach known as inculturation, as opposed to the uncompromising approach of the Protestant missionaries.

In 1892, Father Haghenbeek wrote that the taboo on commensality was not strictly a "Pagan" practice, but merely an expression of "national sentiment and pride", not at all harmful even to Christians: "On the contrary, while proclaiming the equality of all men before God, we now tell them: preserve your race pure, keep your customs, refrain from eating with Lohars (blacksmiths), Turis (bamboo workers) and other people of lower rank. To become good Christians, it (inter-dining) is not required."[46] After all, European priests at that time were not asking their industrialist sponsors to inter-dine and inter-marry with working-class people. But it would be good if missionaries openly acknowledged, as Father Haghenbeek has done, that it is wrong to blame Hindu ("Pagan") religion for the age-old social custom of endogamy and the taboo on commensality.

The Gonds in Bastar have rules of endogamy too, though in Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf's terminology, this generally does not constitute "casteism", by which he means gross inequality and social exclusion. Still, the Gonds have their "untouchables" as well: "Highest among the three untouchable groups are the Inkars, known in Marathi as Mahars... They are low-caste weavers brought in for their skill by the Gonds... Beneath them are the Bhoyars, known in Marathi as Mala, who are low-caste agricultural labourers. At the lowest level are the Madgi, known in Telugu as Madiga, who are leather workers. All three are categorized as scavengers who eat the flesh of dead cattle... The Gond will not greet them, and all three are expected to remain standing in the presence of a Gond and to get off the pathway to allow any other person to pass. Gond children are often heard berating each other as 'dirty Madgis'."[47]

One might reply that these castes are immigrants from non-tribal areas, and that they brought their untouchability along with

[45] The full story is told by A. Van Exem s.j.: "The Mistake: Reviewed after a Century", *Sevartham* 1991.

[46] A. Van Exem: *op.cit.*, p.87.

[47] C. von Fürer-Haimendorf: *op.cit.*, pp.218-219.

them. That is correct, but the fact remains that the egalitarian "noble savages" have agreed to adopt the practice of untouchability towards these castes. Moreover, they have their native, "aboriginal" Shudras as well: "These untouchable communities must be distinguished from the aboriginal service castes of the Pardhans and Totis. The Pardhans and Totis do not beg for alms, but ask for their traditional dues as a servicing group with a long-term symbiotic relationship."[48]

In the modern age, with all the anti-caste consciousness-raising, the Gonds are going through the same evolution as countryside Hindus (a few steps behind urban Hindus): caste endogamy is generally maintained, but efforts are made to abolish untouchability. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf reports: "On the whole, tribal endogamy is being preserved. Marriages between Gonds and Kolams are tolerated, though not approved... But a union between a Gond and a girl considered untouchable is clearly an innovation."

The writer goes on to describe a particular case of exogamous marriage: an educated Gond marries an untouchable Christian Mala girl. This is what happened: "When his liaison became known, he was boycotted by the Gonds and excluded from any marriage celebration or other social occasion. Finally it was decided that his Mala wife could be purified by the performance of a *nau handi* ('nine pots') rite... Seven model huts of small branches were built, and the Mala girl had to crawl through the middle one. All these huts were burnt. Then a golden ring was heated and the girl's tongue was burnt with it. Finally seven pits were dug near a stream bed, and the Mala woman had to wash in the water collected in these pits. The husband also had to bathe, and finally both he and his wife were declared purified... [The] very fact of his social re-acceptance is proof of a considerable change in the attitude towards unorthodox conduct. Thirty years ago a Gond openly consorting even with a Pardhan woman would have been excommunicated without mercy."[49]

For their social system, the Gonds have a religious foundation similar to the Brahminical Manu Smriti: "Gond society has both its vertical stratification and its horizontal divisions, and while with the decline of the raja families the stratification based on hereditary rank has been reduced in relevance, the division of society into

[48] *ibid.*, p.219.
[49] *ibid.*, p.166.

exogamous patrilineal units has retained its importance. The basis of the social structure is a system of four phratries, each subdivided into clans, and the origin of this system is attributed to a divine culture hero. The members of each clan worship a deity described as *persa pen* ('great god'), and in some cases the shrine of this deity lies within the ancestral clan land."[50]

The reader may argue that the Gonds are not a typical "tribal" community, as they used to have a full-fledged feudal system, with maharajas living in sumptuous palaces: "The rulers of Chanda, now situated in Maharashtra, were until 1947 powerful princes whose dominion included a large part of the Adilabad District of Andhra Pradesh. The rule of the Gond rajas of several princely states lasted until 1947, when the British withdrew from India and the Gond states were merged with Madhya Pradesh."[51] True, that is not a stereotype of what we picture in our minds when we hear the term 'tribe', especially after swallowing all the anti-Hindu propaganda upholding the tribes as a model of un-Hindu equality. But my point is precisely that the endogamy and exogamy practices of the tribals and of Sanskritic Hindus are essentially the same, so that those populations (such as, perhaps, the Gonds) who are at a half-way stage between these two levels of social organization, cannot be an exception.

At any rate, there is no dearth of illustrations for the assertion that caste is a feature of tribal society. Let us consider a tribe that has come to epitomize the tribals as a special concern of the Christian missionaries, and that is claimed by them to be completely different from Hinduism: the Santals. According to Joseph Troisi, "it is tabooed to marry outside the tribe or inside one's clan".[52] More precisely: "To protect their tribal solidarity, the Santals have very stringent marriage laws. As mentioned [before], a Santal cannot marry a non-Santal or a member of his own clan. The former is considered as a threat to the tribe's integrity, while the latter is considered incestuous."[53]

Like the Brahmins and like the Gonds just mentioned, the Santals have a religious justification for their endogamy and exogamy rules: "The Santals are very strict about their marriage traditions,

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[50] *ibid.*, p.15.
[51] *ibid.*, p.14.
[52] J. Troisi: *Tribal Religion*, p.227.
[53] *ibid.*, p.167.

especially those regarding their tribal endogamy and clan exogamy. According to their traditions, the ancestors twice ran away from the country in which they were, rather than submit to the disgrace of marrying the *Dikus* or persons not of the tribe.[54] All breaches provoke intense and angry disapproval and carry with them strict penalties. The village *bongas* [= gods] are believed to be polluted by such actions and have, therefore, to be purified and propitiated. So also must the whole village which is considered polluted."[55]

If Brahmins feel polluted when a family member marries outside the caste, and purify their whole village to restore purity, it is held up as a "ridiculous excess of the oppressive caste system which the Aryan Brahmins themselves created". In fact, however, such customs not only exist among tribals as well, but must be considered, even among Brahmins, as a heritage from "pre-Aryan", tribal India.

The punishment for the breach of marriage taboos among the Ho, another tribe of Chhotanagpur, is described by the French anthropologist Serge Bouez: "The trespasses which occasion the exclusion from the tribe without chance of appeal, are essentially those concerning endogamy and exogamy... We will describe in detail the exclusion ceremony of Motti Muni Dei Chattar, daughter of Sunna Chattar. [She] had eloped with a low-caste boy from a nearby village."

The day of her exclusion, the *panchayat* convened, not only to take the foregone and undisputable decision of excluding the girl, but also to fix the compensation which her family would have to pay in order to avert being excommunicated along with her. The panchayat spokesman declared: "Motti Muni Dei has eloped with Bhagula Patra Mahali to have a love marriage... When they heard this, the allies of the village, the near clan members and other Ho men also came... After having considered the request of our tribe, we impose on Sunna Chattar a fine, viz. a goat, fifty rupies, plus two hundred rupies for the allies... To the ancestors of his own house he will sacrifice two birds... To the house of his father-in-law, he will give two hundred rupies... After that, we will accept him back among us."[56]

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[54] Incidentally, the passage indicates that the term *Diku* originally meant any non-member of the tribe, rather than any non-tribal, and that even now it does not mean "a Hindu" as claimed in the missionary manifesto *Truth Shall Prevail.*

[55] J. Troisi: *op.cit.*, p.187.

[56] S. Bouez: *Réciprocité et hiérarchie. L'alliance chez les Ho et les Santals de l'Inde*, p.76.

The breach of the endogamy rule is a most serious matter, involving the whole community. As Bouez observes: "Among the Ho, the matrimonial trespasses which occasion rites of exclusion cause a ritual impurity which affects the entire village [or at least the entire exogamous clan]." When a Brahmin clan is panic-stricken because one of its members has violated the caste rules, it is held up to ridicule; but the very same thing exists among tribes which are, at least according to the missionaries, entirely free of Hindu culture.

In the speech by the Ho village elder on Motti Muni Dei's exogamous love marriage, the reason for this grim seriousness about endogamy is given indirectly but with sufficient clarity, and it is a very "tribal" reason indeed. The *ancestors*, both of the girl's father's family and of the girl's mother's family, will be very displeased by the loss of this grand-daughter and of her entire progeny; that is why they have to be compensated with money or appeased with animal sacrifices. Tribal ancestors want to see their lineage preserved, because it is their link with the future, their constituency of worshippers and sacrificers: therefore, every loss of a tribe member (along with his or her entire progeny) through marriage outside the tribe, must be prohibited. That, essentially, is the animist foundation of endogamy, a practice attested worldwide among the most divergent tribal populations, and with no debt to any Brahminical intervention.

Father A. Van Exem s.j. explains the non-doctrinal and yet profoundly religious attachment of the tribals to their endogamy and non-commensality rules thus:

"According to the *Sarna* [i.e. tribal-traditional] myths of origin, God had created mankind, but mankind sinned and deserved to die. So, God sent a rain of fire. Only 'a Brother and a Sister' survived: the progenitors of the tribe. In abstract language we might say: God instituted the tribe to save man from the extreme consequences of original sin. He now guards it jealously by regulating births, marriages and deaths. The community must collaborate with Him: if any of its members has sexual relations with a non-tribal, he or she is cast out of its midst. Commensality with a non-tribal or with a person so cast out is symbolic of sexual relationship and therefore equated with it. A single breach of the taboo automatically casts the offender out. No formal judgment is required. Religious affiliation or so-called Pagan practices do not enter into the picture.

"The observance of the taboo is therefore far more fundamental than the offering of sacrifices to the spirits. If one seeks in another religion an alternative means of effectively dealing with them and of venerating God, this does not affect one's tribal status in the least. On the other hand, renouncing the tribe is normally felt by Sarna people to be nearly as dreadful as abandoning God himself."[57]

In other words, the tribals display the same combination of doctrinal tolerance and caste strictness that is deemed typical of Hinduism: indeed, this combination exists in mainstream Hinduism as a tradition that dates back to tribal antiquity.

Summing up: a tribe is, generally speaking, an endogamous group, i.e. a caste. To say that tribals have no caste distinction is as good as to say that, for instance, the Jats (c.q. Chamars or Rajputs or any other caste group) "have no caste distinction because they all intermarry and treat each other as equals". The endogamous restraint comes out only when one considers the relation between different tribes or different castes: like the castes, a tribe refrains from intermarriage with other communities. The romantic notion that the tribals have no caste distinctions is patently false: they themselves observe very strict rules of exogamy and endogamy. It is not the Brahmins who have imposed endogamy rules on communities at the time of their de-tribalization and integration in agricultural and urban society. On the contrary, the tolerant and anti-revolutionary approach of the Brahmins merely allowed tribes to keep their own social and religious traditions when they were integrated into "civilized" (*Arya*) society: the Brahmins did not impose the caste system, they accepted it and blessed it. The Indian caste system is the continuation in agricultural and urban society of a custom that dates back to the stage of tribal society.

3.9. A definition of Hinduism

In Hindu scriptures, the word *Hindu* is not to be found. *Hindu dharma* claims to be a *manava dharma*, a "human value system", and does not start by dividing mankind into members and non-members of a "Hindu" community. *Hindu* is a Persian geographical term, meaning the inhabitants of the Sindh (Indus) basin, and by extension of the Indian subcontinent. The term was

[57] A. Van Exem: *op.cit.*, p.88.

brought into India by the Islamic invaders. It meant: "Indian Pagan".

For Muslims, a Hindu was by definition not a member of the Abrahamic religions, nor of Persian Paganism (Mazdeism, better known as Zoroastrianism). But a Buddhist, a Jain, a tribal, they were all included in the semantic domain of the term *Hindu*. Though Albiruni had noticed the opposition between Brahmins and Buddhists, he did not see an opposition of "Hindus and Buddhists" or of "Hindus and tribals", nor did later Muslim rulers see an opposition between "Hindus and Sikhs". All Indians who were not Parsis, Jews, Christians or Muslims, were automatically Hindus. So, the original definition of Hindu is: an Indian Pagan.

Since the earliest use of the term *Hindu*, a clear definition has been given with it, and of every group it can be decided whether it fits that definition or not. It does not help if you do not want to carry the name-tag: if you fit the definition, you have no choice but to carry it. The Hindus have not chosen to be called Hindus: others have conceived the term and its definition, and Hindus found themselves carrying this label.

A case study may show the effect of this definition. Some Sikhs claim that they are not Hindus. The grounds for this assertion are incredibly shallow. A Sikh visitor once told me: "Ah, but we wear this steel bangle, and Hindus don't." There is no reason why steel bangles should be considered non-Hindu. The Smritis (of which the observance is already confined to only a section of the Hindus, in a limited period of history) have forbidden many things, but wearing steel bangles is not one of them. And conversely, though Guru Govind Singh is believed to have prescribed the steel bangle as one of the five signs of the Khalsa order, he did not even impose it on all Sikhs, i.e. all followers of the Vaishnava sect known after its founder as Nanak Panth.

At any rate, Sikhism is not based on an exclusive revelation: its scripture includes texts by non-Sikh *bhakti* preachers and honorific references to more ancient Hindu scriptures, but does not include a condemnation of non-Sikh sources anywhere. Not being a tradition based on an exclusive revelation, Sikhism is not even formally akin to the monotheistic traditions, with which it also has no link genetically or ideologically. It is a different matter that Akali writers have tried to forge a quasi-Islamic identity for Sikhism. All Sikhs, whether Khalsa members or not, whether bangle-wearing or not, fall under the heading "Indian Pagans".

The term *Pagan* is generally used for people not belonging to the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. But better than mere convention, there could be a definition of the term *Pagan*. And this definition is readily suggested by the basic meaning of the word. Like its Germanic equivalent *Heathen*, the Latin word *Pagan* literally means: rural. Christianity started as a strictly urban movement, and only after it had grabbed power in the Roman Empire in AD 313 did it start to conquer the countryside.

The association of Christian with urban, Pagan with rural, is more than just a historical accident. It is perfectly logical that Paganism originated in natural surroundings, long before man lived in cities, and that Christianity spread in cities, where a large population was concentrated. The reason is that Paganism is based on reality, on mankind's experience of the life cycles, the powers of nature, the celestial phenomena: anyone living anywhere can be struck with wonder by these realities. By contrast, Christianity is something which has never been discovered by anyone: you must have heard about it from someone. Its artificial belief system will spread in population centres, where a message can be communicated. Moreover, Christianity's doctrine of sin and redemption is not in sympathy with life experience in the countryside, so that Pagan practices continued there until in the last two centuries they were rendered outdated, not by Christianity but by modernity.

Paganism can thus be defined in opposition to the "revealed" religions, whose message is not intrinsic to the world order, so that they cannot be independently discovered, and have to be communicated. Hymns to Fire or to Thunder, as in the Vedas, can be invented by anyone sufficiently gifted, but the information that this one man at that particular place and time was the Redeemer or the Final Prophet, is a contingent piece of information which no-one has ever independently discovered.

To be sure, once Pagan religions develop, the older generation passes its insights and rituals to the the next generation, so that people do not have to start all over from zero (though part of good teaching consists in experimentally rebuilding the whole tradition from the ground up, to make the pupil discover its logic and consistency). Pagan religions are also communicated. But the radical difference is that their process of communication or "tradition" has a genuinely traditional, non-prophetic, non-exclusive, *sanatana* basis.

The general term Pagan should not be taken to indicate a single "natural religion": within the range of Pagan traditions, there are important differences too. It is not because we have outgrown the Christian stereotyping of Paganism as something demonic, that consequently everything Pagan becomes equally desirable. Petty witchcraft and human sacrifice may still be rejected, not on anti-Pagan but on ethical and philosoplhical grounds equally rooted in Pagan traditions. In its definition as "Indian Paganism", Hinduism includes the whole range from animal worship to Upanishadic monist philosophy, and from Shaktic blood sacrifice to Jain extreme non-violence.

If in this whole range something undesirable can be pointed out, then a tested method to outgrow this is also sure to be available, based not on dogmatic condemnation and blind indignation, but on understanding. After all, in Hinduism and in actual human history, there is no absolute cleavage into the Age of Ignorance and the Age of Salvation: it is the same human mind which at one time considered human sacrifice (the offer of the most precious creature to its Creator) as the ultimate in religiosity, and which later developed the profound insight in the unity of the Creator and His creatures, making sacrifices redundant. So, certainly the enemies of Hinduism can point out undesirable things that come within the semantic domain of the term Hinduism, but Hinduism itself can deal with them, like the Hindu Rama dealt with the Hindu Ravana.

The Indian Constitution does not give a definition of the term *Hindu*, but it does define to whom the "Hindu Law" applies.

In spite of its secularist pretences, the Indian Constitution allows Muslims, Christians and Parsis a separate Personal Law. I am not absolutely opposed to this separate treatment of different communities, which merely continues the communal autonomy of castes and sects accepted in pre-modern Hindu states; but from the viewpoint of secularism it is simply unacceptable, and the defence of a separate Muslim Personal Law (which perpetuates medieval injustices) by so-called secularists merely exposes their dishonesty. At any rate, the situation is that Personal Law is divided on the basis of religion, and that one of the legal varieties is called *Hindu Law*.

Article 25 (2)(b) of the Constitution stipulates that "the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jain or Buddhist religion". It does not claim to define who is a Hindu, merely to decide who is a member of the group to which Hindu Law applies.

The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 (which, as a further measure of communal inequality, constitutes a considerable amendment of Hindu customary law by the secular government, which would not dare to touch the other religion-based law systems) goes in greater detail to define this "legal Hindu", by stipulating in Section 2 that the Act applies:

"a. to any person who is a Hindu by religion in any of its forms and developments, including a Virashaiva, a Lingayat or a follower of the Brahmo, Prarthana or Arya Samaj,

"b. to any person who is a Buddhist, Jain or Sikh by religion, and

"c. to any other person domiciled in the territories to which this Act extends who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion..."

This definition of the "legal Hindu", though explicitly not equating him with the "Hindu by religion", is exactly co-terminous with the original Islamic use of the term *Hindu*: all Indian Pagans are legally Hindus. The tribals are not mentioned, except negatively: not being Muslims, Christians, Jews or Parsis, they are implicitly included in the Hindu category. The Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs are explicitly included in the "Hindus by law" but separated from the "Hindus by religion": at this point, the law follows the usage established by Western scholars, contrary to the original usage.

The Akalis have at times criticized the inclusion of the Sikhs in the "legal Hindu" category. When Law Minister Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar first introduced the Hindu Code Bill in 1951, Sardar Hukum Singh regarded the Bill as "a dubious attempt on the part of the Hindus to absorb the Sikhs". Dr. Ambedkar replied: "The application of the Hindu Code to Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains was a historical development and it would be too late, sociologically, to object to it. When the Buddha differed from the Vedic Brahmins, he did so only in matters of creed, but left the Hindu legal framework intact. He did not propound a separate law for his followers. The same was the case with Mahavir and the ten Sikh gurus. The Privy Council had as early as 1830 laid down that the Sikhs were governed by the Hindu law."[58]

This at once explains why Ambedkar's neo-Buddhist followers have not objected to their inclusion in the "legal Hindu" category.

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[58] Dhanajay Keer: *Ambedkar*, p.427, with reference to *Times of India*, 7/2/1951.

On the contrary, this inclusion justifies their inclusion in reservation schemes and other benefits for Hindu ex-Untouchables: as Untouchability was a problem of Hindu society, it is only reasonable that special benefits for this section of Hindu society only apply to ex-Untouchable members of the "legal Hindu" category (the demands of the Churches to extend these benefits to Christian converts, even while spreading propaganda that conversion "liberates from the curse of caste", are a measure of their arrogance and hypocrisy).

When the Ramakrishna Mission went to court to have itself declared a non-Hindu minority (in order to escape the legal anti-Hindu discriminations esp. in education), it claimed that its members could legally still be treated as Hindus in matters of marriage and inheritance, even while being recognized as non-Hindus in the religious sense.[59] In effect, the Ramakrishnaites wanted to have the same status as Sikhs and Buddhists: legal recognition as "legal Hindus and religious non-Hindus". They rightly understood that the law has created a category of semi-Hindus who have no separate traditions of personal law but have nevertheless a separate religious identity entitling them to the privileges accorded to the non-Hindus.

The Indian laws make a distinction between what we may call the "Hindu in the broad sense", to whom Hindu Law applies, and who is coterminous with the Hindu of Persian-Islamic usage, viz. every Indian Pagan; and the "Hindu in the narrow sense", a category which may not include Buddhism and Sikhism. Though the law does not mention them, the tribal religions are also taken to fall partly (except for a measure of accomplished sanskritization) outside this category. Of course, the claims by different groups of belonging to this broad-Hindu but non-narrow-Hindu category should be considered separately and on their own merits, e.g. Buddhism's claim to a distinct identity is stronger than Sikhism's. At any rate, the debate over the definition of Hinduism is largely a debate over whether it is the narrow or the broad definition that should be considered as the "true" definition.

Hinduism in the narrow sense has also been given some at-

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[59] About the ludicrous claim of the Ramakrishna Mission, see M.D. McLean: "Are Ramakrishnaites Hindus? Some implications of recent litigation on the question", in *South Asia*, vol.14, no.2 (1991); and Ram Swarup: ***Ramakrishna Mission in Search of a New Identity*** (Voice of India 1986), and his exchange of arguments with Ram Narayan in *Indian Express* on 19-20/9 and 15-16/11/1990.

tempted definitions. A well-known but evidently inaccurate proposal was made by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who included "belief in the Vedas" and "acceptance of many paths" as criteria. The latter point is a valuable contribution, because it explicitates what is often only a tacit assumption presupposed in most Hindu teachings. The acceptance of many approaches to the ultimate truth is indeed an essential characteristic of Hinduism, distinguishing it from the exclusivism intrinsic to Christianity and Islam. But reduction of Hinduism to the "believers" in the Veda, does injustice to any accepted usage of the term *Hindu*. It shows a rather crude understanding of the exact place of the Veda in the doctrine of its adepts, a place which is radically different from that of the Quran for Muslims, if only because in the Quran it is God who speaks to man, while in the Veda it is man who sings praise to the gods. For a majority of practising Hindus, the Vedas are far away, much less important than the stories from the *Itihasa-Purana* literature and the teachings of Bhakti poets and modern reform Hindus like Swami Vivekananda.

With reference to ch.2.11 and to Shrikant Talageri's reconstruction of India's ancient history, it must be emphasized that the inclusion of non-Vedic elements in Hinduism is not some concession to later trends brought about by an anti-Vedic reaction. On the contrary, there have always been different strands in the culture circle which became known later as Hinduism (not so much along Aryan-Dravidian lines but within the Indo-Aryan speech community), even during the Vedic age itself. The Vedas contain the hymns of one branch of the Lunar lineage settled in the Saraswati basin, its later parts also incorporating some texts and traditions of more easterly tribes; but other branches of the Lunar lineage, and the Solar lineage, and yet other more peripheral branches of the broad Indo-Aryan speech community, all had their traditions. And all these traditions, including Proto-Shramanism which later yielded Jainism and Buddhism, are tributaries of "Aryan" culture. The same can be said of traditions originating in Indian communities outside the Indo-Aryan language domain, including the Tibeto-Burman, Austric and Dravidian speech communities; at least of the Dravidians some contributions have made a conspicuous all-India impact, just like Vedism and Shramanism have, e.g. the Bhakti movement. So, "Hindu" is broader than "Indo-Aryan", which in turn is broader than "Vedic".

(M) A definition commonly accepted by Western scholars is that a Hindu:

1. believes in reincarnation,
2. observes caste rules, and
3. observes the taboo on cow slaughter.[60]

This description fits what the same scholars on other occasions would call "Puranic Hinduism". On all three counts, it does not fit Vedic Hinduism. The Bhagavat Gita contains an explicit affirmation of the doctrine of karma and reincarnation, but is non-committal about cow protection and ambiguous about caste (by upholding *varnashramadharma* but affirming that *varna* is based on *karma* and *guna*, on "work" and "quality", not on family background). The Dharma Shastras explicitly formulate a doctrine of caste and link it with the notion of karma and reincarnation; they also prescribe penalties for cow-slaughter. The above definition might therefore cover a Hinduism defined religiously by the Puranas and socio-ethically by the Dharma Shastras. Sikhism and Indian Buddhism are largely within the domain of this definition. Tribal "Animism" has its own variety of *varnashramadharma* and a strong tradition of endogamy; it may or may not have a notion of reincarnation; but more often than not, it accepts cow-slaughter.

This Puranic-Shastric Hinduism does not coincide with today's Hinduism even in its narrow definition. First of all, Hinduism is not a belief system, its rules extend to behaviour (*achaar*), not to opinion (*vichaar*): therefore, although "belief in reincarnation" is quite common among Hindus (including Sikhs and Buddhists), it is disputable as a defining characteristic of Hinduism, modern or ancient. Ananda Coomaraswamy, perhaps the most accurate and profound 20th-century exponent of many facets of Hindu culture, did not believe in it. By contrast, observing the taboo on cow slaughter, which is a matter of behaviour rather than opinion, would be accepted by most contemporary committed Hindus (definitely including the Sikhs, but not all tribals) as an intrinsic element of Hinduism.

Observing caste rules is still the general practice among Hindus (including Sikhs and tribals), yet it has not been accepted as a defining component of Hinduism in at least one court ruling. The Ramakrishna Mission, in its attempt to acquire non-Hindu status,

[60] This is always given as the definition by my friend Dr. Winand Callewaert in his lectures.

had used the argument of its professed rejection of caste as proof of non-Hinduness, but the Court pointed out that abolition of caste had been the explicit programme of outspoken Hindus like Swami Dayanand Saraswati, so that Hinduism without caste did seem to be possible after all. We will return to this point in ch.5.6.

The dominant hypothesis is that Puranic Hinduism, involving idol-worship, temples, caste, belief in reincarnation and liberation, is a tradition different from Vedic Hinduism, which knows none of the things mentioned: it has fire-rituals conducted at home or in the open air for gods not represented by idols, a simple class system, belief in an afterlife. While the Arya Samaj believes Puranic Hinduism is a degeneration from Vedic Hinduism, many scholars and political activists think it is a synthesis based on pre-Aryan traditions. If this is true, we see that many things deemed typical of Hinduism are pre-Aryan, non-Vedic and definitely indigenous.

Some of the non-Vedic elements in the vast Puranic lore belong to the other streams of Hindu (mostly Indo-European-speaking) culture contemporary with the composition of the Vedas. Other elements are later developments, mostly internal developments rather than borrowings from "non-Aryan" sources. Thus, some of the rishis and rulers mentioned in the Puranas abstained from sacrificial killing and from meat-eating, and an early ban on cow-slaughter was advocated by Zarathustra (if we can read his often metaphorical language properly), who was an ecology-minded dissident in a Vedic-related tradition. The taboo on cow-slaughter may not be Vedic, but it was present in several corners of Aryan culture at least in late-Vedic times. It was definitely an internal Aryan development, probably started very early in non-Vedic quarters, which carried the day and became the standard for Hindu culture as a whole, just like on other points the Vedic custom or norm (e.g. the wedding ritual) became the all-Hindu standard.

On such concrete points as cow-protection and caste, as also on doctrinal points like the belief in reincarnation, Hinduism is indeed a composite culture. However, this "Hindu synthesis" is definitely informed by a common spirit, and historically it is merely the re-unification of traditions developed in different corners during a process of proliferation and differentiation of the ancient Indian culture attested in the Vedas and Puranas.

3.10. The Hindu nationalist definition

A definition nearly equivalent with the definition implied in the Muslim usage of the term Hindu, is the one given by Swatantryaveer V.D. Savarkar: "One for whom India is both fatherland and holyland." Here again, a non-Indian Pagan is excluded because India is not his fatherland, and an Indian Muslim, Christian or Jew is excluded because India is not his "holyland". Here too, a Hindu is an Indian Pagan, and *vice versa*.

Strictly, there may be the following difference between Hindus and certain communities claimed as non-Hindus: it may be claimed for tribals that they consider only their own area as fatherland and holyland, and do not identify with India as a whole. This might even be claimed on behalf of the Sikhs — falsely, considering the pilgrimage tours of some of the Gurus. At any rate, their loyalty would be to an area within India, rather than to one outside of it.

That leaves us with the more fundamental problem that genuine Hindus may not bother to consider India as a kind of "holyland", holier than other pieces of Mother Earth. Hinduism has become international, and increasingly includes people who have never seen India or have only been there once or twice on a family visit, appalled at the dirt and the lack of efficiency and anxious to get back home to London or Vancouver; further, many people with no Indian blood take up practices developed by Hindu culture without being very interested in the geographical cradle of their new-found "spiritual path". The values of Sanatana Dharma are not tied up with this piece of land, and the Vedas or the Gita, though obviously situated in India, are not bothered with notions of "fatherland" and "holyland".

In my book *Ayodhya and After*, I have made a critique of Savarkar's view of Hindutva, which I will presently develop further. Essentially, my point was that religion should not be tied to nationalism. In reply to my criticism, Dr. Shreerang Godbole has taken up Savarkar's defence in a lengthy article in the RSS weekly *Organiser*.[61] Let me first give some general comment on Dr. Godbole's reply.

To start with, I must thank him for drawing the readers' attention to some of Savarkar's writings in Marathi which, as he rightly surmised, I do not read. Among other things, these passages do

[61] Dr. S. Godbole: "Koenraad Elst is Unjust to Veer Savarkar", in *Organiser*, 23/2/1992.

correct to an extent the widespread belief that Savarkar condoned cow-slaughter, an issue which is very sensitive to many Hindus. However, I regret that what makes Indians reach for their pen is not a really political or ideological issue, but merely the fact that one of their heroes has been given an unfair deal (such was never my intention, but if an expert on Savarkar judges that "Koenraad Elst is unjust to Veer Savarkar", I will not quarrel with that). This reduction of political debate to issues of hero-worship only confirms my impression that political thought in India is still immature, a view which I had expressed earlier, and to which Dr. Godbole objects.

It is quite understandable that he smells arrogance in my view that after Aurobindo's withdrawal from politics, Hindu political thought has hardly ever emerged above the elementary level (except for complaining, in which it excels). But I stand by that opinion: while in Europe every sizable political party or ideological pressure-group has set up a think-tank to develop the ideology and formulate policy proposals, and while the Communists in India have a host of intellectuals (mostly on state and university payrolls) working full-time to develop the Marxist view on each and every topic, all valuable and useful political thought produced by the Hindu movement would not exceed a few volumes, to put it mildly. I will give credit for some valuable contributions to Balraj Madhok, author of the Jan Sangh manifestoes, and to a few more people. Significantly, the best critiques of the problems facing Hindu society have been formulated by people who are insistently independent from the declared *Hindutva* movement, such as Ram Swarup, Sitaram Goel, Girilal Jain and Arun Shourie.

But the work done by these generous volunteers may not be enough, considering the urgency of the situation. As long as there is no intellectual mobilization, Hindu society is badly on the defensive. Hindu society has a host of bright young people available, trained in traditional or modern learning, whose talent is wasted because there seems to be no Hindu nerve centre interested in putting them to work. The official Hindu leaders have still not realized how indispensable the intellectual dimension is to the success of a cultural and political movement; and Hindu moneybags will rather spend their funds on Mother Teresa than on an institute for Hindu thought.

One field of intellectual work that has an important bearing on

practical political thought, is of course history. Dr. Godbole will forgive me if I use one of his own remarks as an example of how inexact the *Hindutva* movement's view of history is. He writes: "Savarkar was the very first to assert that the so-called Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 was in fact a War of Independence, a position that has been belatedly accepted by official India."

If official Nehruvian India has accepted the position, there should be something wrong with it. Indeed, this position now serves the view that Hindus and Muslims have always been friends, fighting shoulder to shoulder against the British who have subsequently spoiled the Hindu-Muslim brotherhood by creating communalism. In fact, the Muslim nominal rulers, especially the Moghul emperor who lived on British hand-outs and the Nawab of Awadh who had just been deposed, saw the Mutiny as an occasion to restore the Islamic empire. They tried to enlist Hindu support by conciliatory gestures (including a promise to restore the Ram Janmabhoomi site), but that should not mislead us into believing that the fox had changed its character.

A Western scholar sees it this way: "The 1857 Mutiny, regarded as the most spectacular event in 19th-century India, also illustrated the most spectacular illustration of Muslim militancy, couched in terms of *jihad*, against the British... the British were aware of the great debate that was raging within the Indian Muslim community as to the status of India. The question of whether British-held India was to be considered *Dar-ul-Harb*, now that Islamic rule had vanished, and the ensuing duty of Muslims to revolt, became the concern not only of Muslim Indian doctors of law, but was referred to scholars as far away as Mecca itself."[62]

Another scholar knows that it was Muslim militants who "almost universally were regarded as the fomentors of the revolt and its chief beneficiaries. The first sparks of disaffection, it was generally agreed, were kindled among the Hindu Sepoys who feared an attack on their caste. But the Muslims then fanned the flames of discontent, and placed themselves at the head of the movement, for they saw in these religious grievances the stepping-stone to political power. In the British view, it was Muslim intrigue, and Muslim leadership, that converted the Sepoy Mutiny into a political conspiracy aimed at the extinction of the British Raj. The British

[62] Raphael Israeli: *Muslims in China* (Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series, no. 29, Malmö 1980), p.108.

were also concerned that the Muslim community, though few in numbers, was far more hostile throughout the uprising."[63]

Though a few Hindu rulers, like the Rani of Jhansi, believed they could achieve independence, others stayed away from the rebellion or even opposed it, firstly because they estimated that ultimate defeat was certain, and secondly because they did not want to make common cause with the Muslim rulers. The Sikhs, the most conscious Hindus of the time, saw it for what it was: an attempt to restore the Moghul empire. The Mutiny was a culmination of the Faraizi and Wahhabi jihads which Muslims had been waging earlier, and wherever Hindus were in a minority, it led to forced conversions and killings of Hindus, ostentative cow-slaughter and other classics of Islamic politics. The Mutiny was certainly not a whole-hearted "war of independence" supported by all Indians, and the Muslim motivation was definitely not the will to establish a Savarkarite *Hindu Rashtra*.

Savarkar has rightly glorified Chhatrapati Shivaji's Hindu war of independence against the Moghuls (in his book *Hindu Pad Padashahi*), but in that part of his analysis of India's history, we see another demonstration of the weakness of the Hindu mind in its understanding of politics and history. It is all very fine to glorify Shivaji's commitment and strategic genius, but the more useful part of the story should have been an analysis of the Hindu failure after Shivaji. Shivaji had a strategy, which was better than just being heroic and dying; but he could only defeat the Islamic power at the military level, and did not attack their final source of aggression, viz. their belief system. It would take until Swami Dayanand Saraswati before any Hindu could write a critique of Islam, and until Savarkar before any Hindu could formulate the observation that Islam's strength comes from its synthesis of rapine with religion.

After Shivaji, the Hindus have been going from victory to victory for half a century, but it is wrong to infer that Hinduism had defeated Islam: even apart from the Peshwas' shattering defeat at Panipat in 1761, Hinduism had not at all neutralized Islam as a potent and determined enemy. Islam retained its ideological self-confidence, which was never challenged by pointed Hindu argument, and it was preparing mentally for a come-back. That come-

[63] Thomas Metcalf: *The Aftermath of the Revolt: India 1857-1870* (Princeton University Press, Princeton 1964), p.298.

back was called the Mutiny, and if it had succeeded, Hindus would have found that Shivaji's brilliant strategy had not struck Islam deeply enough (as they have had to experience later, in the Khilafat and Partition movements).

In parenthesis, and with due respect, it strikes the modern reader that Savarkar's writing is full of superlatives. In publications of lesser Hindutva writers, the situation is often much worse: they sound almost as emotional as Syed Shahabuddin's diatribes. After all that Rishis and Tirthankaras and Buddhas have taught about the value of dispassionate observation, it is disappointing to find that Hindu writers cannot keep their cool and go off on an emotional tangent of either bombastic glorification or sterile self-pity.

Coming back to the topic of "Hindu nationalism", we may question the wisdom of defining a religious tradition by an external characteristic such as its geographical location. To this, Dr. Godbole argues that Savarkar never meant to confine Hindus to the territorial entity India. Drawing attention to some of Savarkar's writings in Marathi, he states that to Savarkar, a true Hindu is most aware of the sacredness of the universe as a whole, rather than of Hindusthan alone. Thus: "A Hindu is most intensely so, when he ceases to be Hindu... or... exclaims: 'The limits of the universe — there the frontiers of my country lie.'"[64] To say that for a Hindu the entire universe is his fatherland and holyland, would be to equate Hindutva at least in its contents with "Paganism" in its philosophical connotation of pantheism or monism.

However, Dr. Godbole also cites a statement which in his opinion refutes the notion that Savarkar had a territorial concept of Hindutva, but which in my opinion confirms this territorial approach. To Savarkar, the fact of emigration from India need not diminish one's Hindu-ness: "But will this simple fact of residence in lands other than Hindusthan render one a non-Hindu? Certainly not, for the first essential of Hindutva is not that a man must not reside in lands outside India, but that wherever he goes or his descendents may happen to be, he must recognize 'Sindhusthan' as the land of his forefathers. Nay more, it is not a question of recognition either. If his ancestors came from India as Hindus, he cannot help recognizing India as his 'pitrubhu' [ancestor-land]. So this definition of Hindutva is compatible with any conceivable expan-

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[64] Reference to Savarkar: *Essentials of Hindutva* (1923), p.90-91, in *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya*, vol.4, Maharashtra Prantik Hindu Sabha, Pune 1964.

sion of our Hindu people. Let our colonists... contribute all that is best in our civilization to the upbuilding of humanity. Let them enrich the people that inhabit the earth from Pole to Pole with their virtues and let them in return enrich their own country and race by imbibing all that is healthy and true wherever found. Hindutva does not clip the wings of the Himalayan eagles but only adds to their urge... The only geographical limits to Hindutva are the limits of our earth."[65]

What Savarkar says is that even Indians colonizing other lands remain Indians, just like the British colonizers remained British. He still considers as Hindus those who retain a link with India, even if non-resident. That is definitely a territorial definition of Hindutva.

In a descriptive sense, Savarkar's territorial definition is acceptable as a definition of "Hinduism in the broad sense": it excludes Abrahamic religions, as well as Persian and other non-Indian Paganism, and includes all India-based traditions insofar as they are practised by Indians. The territorial link with India corresponds with actual usage: few will disconnect the term Hindu from the country India.

On the other hand, Savarkar's territorial definition of *Hindu* has come to figure prominently in "Hindu nationalism", a doctrine which reduces Hinduism to a kind of Indian nationalism. Many in the Hindu movement have sought to justify and to "de-communalize" their Hindutva ideology by equating it with a European-style secular nationalism. People have tried to reduce the term *Hindu* to a synonym with *Indian*, thus depriving it of its cultural contents. At the same time, the enemies of Hinduism are also defined in territorial rather than ideological terms: though Savarkar himself was a keen critic of Islam, many who follow his territorial-nationalistic approach prefer to blame "Arab and Turkish invaders" rather than Islam for all the destruction which Hindu society suffered in the Middle Ages.

For instance, Atal Behari Vajpeyi has said that the term *Hindu Rashtra*, meaning the political Hindu movement's goal of a Hindu state, should be replaced with *Bharatiya Rashtra*, the "Indian state", which in fact is nothing more than a synonym for the Indian republic already in existence. Similarly, the term Hindu is emptied of its contents by renaming Muslims as "Mohammedi Hindus" and

[65] Reference to Savarkar: *Essentials of Hindutva*, p.76.

Christians as "Christi Hindus". Such silly semantic manipulations only serve to avert an ideological confrontation between Hinduism and, mostly, Islam. Instead of saying that "Islam is fomenting communal riots", these Hindus prefer to allege that "Pakistan is fomenting communal riots" (when in fact Pakistan itself is only the product of communal violence fomented by Islam). Instead of attacks by Islam on Hinduism, they see attacks by foreigners against India. Out of cowardice or guilty ignorance, they misrepresent both Hinduism and the problems it is facing, thus contributing to the strategy of Hinduism's enemies, who are very clear about the situation.

Then again, there may be a way in which the term "Mohammedi Hindu" makes sense. In Sarnath I once met a Pakistani Muslim family coming to pay homage to the memory of the Buddha, who had given his first sermon there. When I asked them whether they were not overstepping the strictures against idol-worship contained in the Quran, they said that religions are essentially all the same, that they had great reverence for Buddha, that Buddhism had had a great centre in their own area, Peshawar (referring to Takshashila), etc. These people, though not interested in converting out of Islam (which in Pakistan would mean big trouble), were sharing some of the starkly un-Islamic assumptions and sensibilities of the Hindus.

You could say that to an extent they were Hindu by culture, though Muslim by religion. The same thing can (or could, because the *tabligh* propaganda campaigns have been changing the picture) be said about much of the Muslim population of Southeast Asia: calling themselves Muslims but chanting the Ramayana as a matter of "cultural heritage". As Frits Staal and other Indologists have observed, Hinduism is not a religion, in the sense of "belief system", but a culture, in which even conflicting belief systems can be accomodated. That would bring us to a cultural definition of Hinduism, as suggested by the Muslim viewpoint that "Hindus do not have a religion; theirs is a culture". When religion is used in the sense of "revealed belief system", as is done by Muslims, then that statement is a compliment.

The term "Mohammedi Hindu" may be new, but the equivalent term "Hindu Muslim" is not: in Arabic and Persian usage, the word *Hindu* is sometimes used as interchangeable with *Hindvi* of *Hindi*, i.e, as a geographical term "Indian". That is why once, according to a story, Imam Bukhari (who had accused P.N. Oak of insulting

the Prophet by calling him a Hindu) was called a Hindu when visiting Saudi Arabia. Some Hindus think this is the solution, and they propose to use the term "Hindu" as synonym and replacement for "Indian", esp. on passports. Let us see what the effect would be. Arriving in the airport of Jeddah, the Imam fills in a form, and writes: "Nationality: Hindu. Religion: Muslim. Purpose of visit: preparing jihad against Hindu Kafirs." So, what have you gained?

Nationality is not the issue at all. The problem with Islam is not that it is foreign: it has destroyed the native culture of the Arabs too, on whom it was imposed by a fellow-countryman.

Slogans that the Indian Muslims are "foreigners", are entirely misplaced: most of them are the progeny of converted Hindus, they have the Indian nationality, they play a prominent role in Indian politics, etc. To be sure, many of them deplore being Indians: they give their children Arabic names, and have fashioned fake genealogies making them descendents of the Prophet (which is what is implied in the title *Sayyid*), his companions or other prominent Muslim foreigners; they themselves have floated the two-nation theory and most of them emotionally sympatize with the Pakistani struggle in Kashmir (though rationally, they calculate that the separation of Kashmir from India might hurt secularism, which is needed as Islam's first line of defence). But even so, they are still Indians by any accepted definition.

Even those Indians who are "anti-national" are not "foreigners". It is alleged that Muslims cheer for Pakistan during cricket games. So what? All non-Muslim British citizens of Indian descent, except Salman Rushdie, cheer for India in a game between Britain and India; that does not make them anti-national in the eyes of the British. So, the problem is not that Indian Muslims cheer for Pakistan; the problem is that they *created* Pakistan. And that was not the doing of any "foreign" power to which the Indian Muslims owed loyalty, it was the result of the doctrine that Muslims and non-Muslims are separate nations, which is an intrinsic element of Islam.

All these impotent semantic manipulations about "Indianizing Islam" and "Mohammedi Hindus" are just a an object of ridicule for secularist columnists. If Muslims drop their "foreign moorings" and accept the label "Mohammedi Hindu", this would indeed have bizarre implications. It would mean, for instance, that these beef-eating neo-Hindus who despise every expression of Hinduism, will have to be allowed into Hindu temples where a well-wisher of

Hinduism like myself is not allowed to enter. It would even mean that, while Hindus in truncated India are still struggling for the hollow label "Bharatiya Rashtra", the M-Hindus in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi sectors of Akhand Bharat already have a full-fledged Hindu (M) Rashtra, where only a Hindu (M) can become president, where insulting the prophets revered by M-Hinduism is punished with death, etc.

Defining India's communal problem in terms of secular nationalism, as a matter of "nationalist" vs. "anti-national" loyalties, is partly the effect of the dominant thought coming from the West: the secular British agreed with the Muslim League that Indian Muslims qualify as a separate nation and that separate nations are entitled to a separate state. But mostly, it is the effect of Hindu escapism, of the refusal to confront Islam ideologically. Instead of denouncing Islamic fanaticism, which would mean denouncing Islamic doctrine itself, Hindu leaders prefer to blame Muslims for cheering cricket players coming from a particular territory (which incidentally is part of the Sacred Motherland, and deserves better than to carry this stigma of "focus of Indian Muslims' extra-territorial loyalty"). They prefer to avoid an ideological confrontation and tell themselves that Islam itself is basically good, that it started as "a force of unity for the Arab nation" and subsequently came to India with "a message of equality", etc. These ridiculous exercises in self-deception are understandable as a typical symptom of Hindu society's deprived and terrorized condition.

One distortion leads to another, and from a redefinition of the communal problem in terms of secular nationalism comes a redefinition of Hinduism in the same set of terms. Hinduism becomes the "national culture", i.e. the culture generated on Indian territory. But Hinduism is not a self-referential tradition, which venerates the Motherland because it brought forth the Hindu culture, i.e. the worship of the Motherland, and so on. The Vedas or the Gita treat Aryavarta, Jambudweep etc. merely as geographical terms, and do not bother about singing the Motherland's praise. The worship of Bharat Mata, the goddess Mother India for which Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated a temple in Benares, is a modern phenomenon.

India as a territory has acquired a special aura because of its association with a culture upholding ***universal*** values, Sanatana Dharma, similar to the sanctity which Rama's ***janmabhoomi*** acquires because of its association with Rama. India as a political

entity deserves loyalty because it is the political embodiment and protector (however imperfect) of this universal culture. But this territory and this political embodiment are accidental: "Hindu nationalism" in its most common expressions puts things upside down, and treats the accidental as the essential, the geographical location as the central object of worship and loyalty. In practice, Hindu nationalism stems from a correct instinct of loyalty and willingness to serve one's society and culture, coupled with a deficiency and crudeness of actual knowledge about this same Hindu social and cultural heritage.

3.11. Islamic separatism

There are a number of separatist movements in India, and even more agitators who hope to get new separatisms going. In all these separatist movements, need it be repeated, the starting point always is: "We are not Hindus." Every anti-India separatist movement is an anti-Hindu movement. This is a point where the Hindu nationalists will feel confirmed in their conviction that Hinduism is equivalent to loyalty to India. The Scheduled Tribes are approached as a possibly fruitful recruiting-ground for separatism, with the message that they are not Hindus. The christianized tribal areas in the North-East have been the scene of separatist violence for decades. Before we go on to consider this tribal separatism, we will look into a more voracious enemy of India's unity and integrity: Islam.

The most important ideological source of anti-Indian separatism, is of course Islam, which has already succeeded in grabbing Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh and the Maledives. Today, it is working for the separation of Kashmir and a prospective Banglabhoomi in the vicinity of Bangladesh; parts of Kerala and western Uttar Pradesh are also on the agenda, now out of reach but perhaps easy to get once other separatisms succeed in destabilizing the Indian state. And by then India's western border districts may also have a Muslim majority susceptible to separatist mobilization.

It is not true that all Muslims are disloyal to India, but agitators know how to polarize an otherwise harmonious society along communal lines: create terror and make them believe that only an Islamic state can give the Muslims safety. It has worked in 1947, and it may work again. The main weapon of these agitators is Islamic doctrine, to which all Muslims have a nominal loyalty: the

thing to do is to convince the people that the doctrine to which they adhere demands a political expression in the form of an Islamic state. As long as things go well, Muslims may consider that socio-economic stability is in their interest, but as soon as polarization turns violent, they may become receptive to the political message of Islam. The intrinsically separatist thrust of Islamic doctrine (at least for Muslims in a non-Muslim state) has been dealt with in other *Voice of India* publications, and we need not repeat their analysis here.[66] The essence is that Muslims form a separate nation, the *umma*, which should not (except provisionally when there is a tactical need) accept non-Islamic rule, and which should separate from a non-Islamic state if it is not strong enough to take power there.

The strategists of Islam are not stupid: they attack where the enemy is weak, and keep quiet where their strength is not yet sufficient to strike. That is why their militancy is generally proportionate to their local strength: an outright fight for secession in Kashmir, organizing armed militias in Kerala and the Delhi area, an appeal to secularism in India as a whole. But as part of a long-term strategy, everywhere they take little steps here and there in a sense that can only be considered as hostile to Hinduism. Islamic subversion is financed lavishly, and is very daring and ambitious. Its organization gives proof of central planning and professional co-ordination. The process of settling Bangladeshi and Pakistani infiltrators is by far not as chaotic as the huge numbers involved would make us expect. They know where to go, local politicians have been bribed in advance into very specific deals, they collectively obey instructions at short notice. A well-known tactic consists in buying up all the property surrounding potential centres of Hindu culture and social organization, esp. temples. In some cities in the South, this policy has effectively isolated important temples from their population base.

Lest anyone claim that I am merely repeating an RSS rumour, I may point out that the same tactic is being used in other countries, and attested by non-Hindu sources. In Egypt, the infiltration and disturbance of Coptic neighbourhoods is an acute problem. This procedure has also played a role in the near-complete expulsion of Christians from eastern Turkey. A report from Indonesia describes

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[66] esp. Sitaram Goel: *Muslim Separatism, Causes and Consequences*, 1987.

how a priest settled in a town and how the Catholic inhabitants collected resources to build a church and expand the Catholic school. An inhabitant testifies: "But what does the priest do? Everything he can to restrain us! 'Please', he begs us, 'don't provoke the Muslims!' That is the situation. When we Christians finally manage to manifest ourselves, we are being restrained. All religions are equal, but Islam is more equal... *Since the priest lives with us, three mosques have been built around his house.* Via the loudspeakers he has to suffer the Quranic incantations five times a day and every night the agressive and impolite sermons of the imams. As soon as he puts one brick on another, a protest note is sent from the mosques: 'disturbing of the peace', they say."[67] This formally non-violent but undeniably hostile method of disrupting non-Muslim community life need not necessarily be part of a consciously planned strategy, but the large sums of money which it involves in India do suggest that a central agency is involved.

Demographic aggression is perhaps the most important tactic in the Islamic strategy. In the list of countries with the fastest-growing populations (*vide* the doubling-rate in the country-wise data in the yearbooks of the *Encyclopaedia Brittannica*), we find Islamic countries on top, only in the company of some African countries, for which the estimates are much too high anyway, given their AIDS problem. And the more Islamic they are, the faster they grow. The only Muslim-majority country with a lower growth-rate than India is Indonesia, an expressly non-Islamic state. Roughly equal with India are Turkey and Tunesia, countries with a (now eroding) secular tradition of some decades. But Iran and Saudi Arabia are among the topmost breeders, doubling their population in less than 20 years.

This is simply a fulfilment of Mohammed's injunction that he wanted his followers to be more numerous than other nations.[68] It is also rendered almost inevitable by the position of women in Islamic society. On the other hand, it is true that medieval Muslim writers have given sympathizing attention to the issue of birth control, but that was in a situation of unchallenged Muslim power which was thought to be guaranteed by God till the Day of Judgment, not in a situation of Muslim decline and subservience to

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[67] *Wereldwijd*, 11/1992.

[68] "Marry women who will love their husbands and be very prolific, for I want you to be more numerous than any other people", *Mishkatu'l Masabih*, book 13.

other powers, as in the 20th century, nor in one of permanent confrontation as in contemporary India, which is part of the *Dar-al-Harb*, the land of strife where Imams exhort their flock to grow more Muslims. For that matter, even these medieval writings on contraceptive methods have never endangered the steady increase of the Muslim percentage in the very countries where they were produced.

In the Indian subcontinent, Muslims numbered less than 20% in the census of 1881, and more than 24% in the last all-subcontinental census in 1941. After that, the difference in growth rate between Muslims and non-Muslims has even increased, as birth control became common among the latter, much less among the former. Now, every decade the Muslim percentage in the Subcontinent increases by about 1.5%, with the rate of increase itself increasing. In 1800, Muslims were 1 in 7, in 1850 they were 1 in 6, in the 1880s they became 1 in 5, around 1950 they were 1 in 4, and shortly after the year 2010 they will be 1 in 3. Already, militant Muslims are talking of Akhand Bharat, a kind of re-unification, and especially Bangladesh suggests that there should be an open border: the perspective of numerically overtaking the Hindus at least in parts of India is beckoning.

In truncated India, Muslim population has officially grown 3% in forty years (from less than 10% to nearly 13% in 1951-91), and Muslim leaders claim that the true figure of Muslim population is about 3% higher. In Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal too, the Muslim percentage has continually increased (a small decrease in Pakistan between 1971 and 1981 is explained by the fact that Ahmadiyyas were officially stamped non-Muslims in 1974).

In an article seeking to "explode" the "myth" of Muslim demographic aggression, journalists Namita Bhandare, Louise Fernandes and Minu Jain themselves admit that according to official surveys, "the disapproval of family planning is highest among Muslims", while "the practice of family planning methods in 1980 was lowest amongst Muslims (only 23% of those surveyed practised it as opposed to 36% Hindus)".[69] They further admit that between 1971 and 1981, "the Hindu population was up by 24.15%, whereas the Muslim population shot up by 30.59%". Further, they give the decline in fertility levels in the same period: 20.1% decline for ur-

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[69] *Sunday*, 7/2/1993.

ban and 20.0% for rural Hindus, 18.5% for urban and 17.3% for rural Muslims. So, the already lower fertility level of the Hindus is declining faster than that of the Muslims. The only counter-argument which the secularists can offer, is that it is all due to Muslim poverty, that "the reason has to do with economics and not with religion", the worn-out Marxist cliche.

According to *The Economist*, "Hindu militants are talking nonsense by predicting that chunks of the country will gain Muslim majorities and then secede".[70] Of course, *The Economist*, like most liberal papers from the West, has already amply demonstrated its incompetence on things Islamic. For instance, it has been advocating Turkey's accession to the European Community with the argument that the ongoing urbanization of the Turkish population will weaken the mental grip of Islam, when anybody can see that Islamic fundamentalism thrives in the cities much more than in the countryside, and that in the last decade, Islam has steadily been eclipsing Turkish secularism.

In the matter of India's demography too, the paper simply ignores verifiable facts (though it acknowledges that Muslims are less willing to use birth control, and that the infant mortality rate is lower among Muslims because they are more concentrated in the cities where medical care is better). What happens in Muslim-majority areas has been demonstrated in Kashmir: even *The Economist* could not deny that Islam has promoted secessionism there. Whether demography can change Hindu-majority into Muslim-majority areas, can best be verified in the districts surrounding Bangladesh, where this shift has effectively taken place. True, immigration played a larger part in it than natural growth, but the Muslim immigration pressure from Bangladesh is itself the result of the Muslim demographic explosion. And already, secessionist slogans are heard in these new Muslim-majority areas. Eventhough Bangladesh does not have the strength to support anti-Indian separatism the way Pakistan does, a full-fledged separatism in India's North-East is now a distinct possibility.

It hardly makes sense to react to this demographic aggression with a Hindu demographic counter-offensive, if at all it were possible to surpass the Muslim community in this discipline. Rather, Hindus have to make sure that Islam loses its teeth before it can

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[70] *The Economist*, 7/11/1992.

swallow their country. Compare: only a few decades ago, Dutch Protestants warned that Catholics were going to take over the country with their higher birth rate; meanwhile, Catholics have indeed overtaken Protestants in percentage, but the combined percentage of both is not even 50% anymore, and the idea that the toothless Dutch Catholic Church could grab political power has become surrealistic. In the West, Christianity is no longer dangerous, neither by numbers nor by ideological commitment. Similarly, before the demographic presence of Islam becomes too strong, there is time enough to neutralize the political threat which Islam poses. Hindu society will be alright if it resolves to mentally liberate that section of Indians whose ancestors have fallen prey to Islam and who have been conditioned since childhood to revere the Quran as exclusive revelation and to consider the non-Muslims as enemies.

A short version of this approach is sometimes suggested by Hindu speakers as a solution to the problem of infiltration from overpopulated Bangladesh: mass conversion of the Bangladeshi immigrants. Fine, but who is going to do it? It would have been quite possible if at the time of Partition, the Congress leadership had accepted the oft-heard proposal of a full exchange of population: in that case, a Bangladeshi crossing the border would know that he is entering territory vacated by the Muslims, where he has no place except by converting. But now, it will be the long road of freeing the intellectual atmosphere from the anxiety to see the greatness of Islam, and replace it with a frank criticism of Islam. This is the way the Christian stranglehold on Western society was broken: make them think again about their ideological commitment by exposing its irrational basis and inhuman history.

When considering the relation between the separatism of certain tribes and that of local Muslim majorities, we find that in the case of the latter, it is a strictly Islamic separatism, often at cross-purposes with tribal autonomy movements. As the bitter experience of the Chakma tribals in Bangladesh has proven, Islamic demographic aggression is meant to islamize all lands, regardless of whether they are Hindu or "animist" or Christian, regardless of whether the inhabitants are urbanites or peasants or tribals.

Tribal mistrust of the Muslims is not a new phenomenon. Joseph Troisi observes: "There is, however, a remarkable abhorrence, among the Santals, of the Mohammedans, whom they call Turuk, a

term which carries a connotation of contempt. According to their tradition, the sojourn of the Santal ancestors in 'the corrupt and defiled land' of the Muslims was attended with such grave harassment that contact with Muslims must be avoided." Muslim traders still do business with the Santals, but "the Santals of Pangro, like many other Santals elsewhere, however, do not accept food from these Muslims".[71] In Assam big massacres have occurred between tribals and Bangladeshi infiltrators. It is only a strong anti-Hindu animus which manages to imagine a common "minorities' front" including Muslims as well as tribals.[72]

Islamic separatism is the hardest variety. It is the only one which has succeeded so far, and it is not giving up its desire for more. By contrast, Sikh (or rather, Akali) separatism was doomed to failure, because it had no durable ideological basis. No matter how hard the terrorists tried, they could not get Hindu-Sikh riots going (the massacre of Sikhs by activists of the secularist Congress party in Delhi after the murder of their leader in 1984 was not a Hindu-Sikh riot, in spite of secularist efforts to "rationalize" it as one; even Khushwant Singh admitted that the "Hindu communalists" had saved many Sikhs while secularists were killing them). Though the Akalis had tried very hard to recast Sikhism in the Islamic mould, with separatism and terrorism as a consequence, the common Sikhs continued to feel part of Hindu society. The *"We are not Hindus"* line had never gone very deep among the Sikhs, and therefore they remained basically loyal to the Indian state.

3.12. A Christian Partition

In the 1950s, the Christian missionaries in Madhya Pradesh were confronted with the Niyogi Committee Report which exposed their subversive activities. They feared seriously that they were going to be expelled. In my country, the Jesuits collected 50 million Belgian Francs (over 1 million US $) to save their mission in Chhotanagpur; an unofficial Jesuit source has it, that the money was used to bribe the government.[73] Considering Nehru's sympa-

[71] J. Troisi: *op.cit.*, p.247.

[72] We are not even considering those tribal and semi-tribal communities which came into existence when Hindus escaped the Islamic terror during the Muslim period. About this category of tribes, see K.S. Lal: *The Legacy of Muslim Rule in India*, p.271-277.

[73] When you read the minutes of the debate in the Constituent Assembly, the outstanding enthusiasm for the "fundamental right to propagate religion" on the part of members not otherwise known for their love for Christianity, you cannot escape the impression that bribes have played a crucial role. See the report in Sitaram Goel: *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters*, ch.14.

thy for all anti-Hindu forces, we are confident that he didn't need bribes to protect the missions. At any rate, the Niyogi report remained a mere paper tiger, as Nehru's government refused to take note of its findings.

During this crisis, the missionaries got into their act and insisted that they had never been engaged in politics. That was of course not true. At the time of the Partition, Christian mission centres had dreamed up a plan for a Christian Partition, in collaboration with the Muslim League. The far North-East, Chhotanagpur and parts of Kerala would become Christian states, forming a non-Hindu chain with the Nizam's Hyderabad, which would have become part of Pakistan, and with Pakistani Bengal. The secret agreement between the Muslim League and missionaries acting as "representatives of the tribal interests", is sometimes used in Muslim propaganda as proof that "Muslims and tribals are natural allies"; in fact it only proves that the Christian and the Muslims varieties of separatism get along, at least as long as they have a common enemy. Sadly for the Christian separatists, Sardar Patel foiled their plan.

Later, the missionaries involved themselves in the secessionist struggle in India's North-East (as well as on the Burmese side of the border). Claiming a role of mediators, they provided the secessionists with strategic information. Their negotiator Rev. Michael Scott was caught red-handed in helping the secessionists, and asked to leave the country. The missionaries applauded the compromise of separate tribal states carved out of Assam as a great victory for the mission, and have been dictating politics in Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya ever since. Christians are not separatist hardliners, but will use separatism as a first bid to wrest concessions sufficient to ensure Christian control over the coveted areas.

An analogous story is enacted in Sri Lanka. Close observers had already surmised a Christian hand in the secularist and ex-Marxist Tamil separatist movement. Here, more than in Nagaland and Mizoram, it would be unfair to say that the Church is behind the separatist movement, but it does sympathize with the objective of disconnecting the Tamil areas from Colombo's control; a peace agreement could be influenced to maximize Christian gains from a political reorganization of Sri Lanka. In January 1993, the Sri Lankan Catholic and Anglican bishops did some mediation between the Tamil Tigers and the government in Colombo (2 de-

tained policemen, from among 40, were released). After meeting top terrorist Velupillai Prabhakaran, the Anglican bishop of Colombo called him "a very humane person".

A simple consideration of whose interests are served by an autonomous if not independent Tamil Eelam, populated by nominal Hindus dehinduized by generations of Christian schooling, and free from the assertive Buddhists, easily reveals that Christians have a motive to support the Tamil separatists. The fact that they repeat the behaviour pattern of earlier Christian-backed separatist movements, is therefore not without significance. The Christians are too clever now to burn their fingers on an open involvement, but they are certainly ready to pick the fruits of Tamil autonomy if and when it is achieved.

When Prof. A.K. Kisku declares before the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples that "none of the tribal groups have asked for secession from the country", it is hard to believe that he does so in good faith. He simply must know that the separate states of Mizoram and Nagaland had been conceded their statehood as a compromise between the government's concern for India's territorial integrity and the pressure of tribal guerrilla forces (backed by Pakistan, China and the missionaries) who had been fighting for full secession. He is also aware that some of these separatist guerrillas have been continued or revived even after a separate *pradesh* had been conceded.

Some of the missionaries have not given up their dream of a united Christian state in the North-East, stretching between the rivers Brahmaputra and Chindwin (wherefrom the provisional name *Brachin*). In fact, their desire for a separate state is bound to become very acute when the Bangladeshi infiltrators take on the Christian states as well.

The missionaries know that India's secularists are shameless traitors who aid and abet the infiltrators. The secularists go on praising Christianity and using its alleged merits as a stick to beat Hinduism with, but they will not lift a finger to stop the Muslims from overrunning Christian areas. So far, the infiltrators have mostly settled in Assam, Tripura, West Bengal, Bihar and East Delhi, but their numbers are bound to swell as Bangladesh's population continues to explode, and the North-East will not be spared. So, merely to save themselves from being absorbed in Islamic Bangladesh, the missionaries may have to insist on freeing them-

selves from secularist India.

One thing they could do, is to join hands with the Hindus, because on this matter, they have vital common interests. It is in this light that the BJP support to the candidacy of Prof. G.G. Swell, a Christian tribal from Meghalaya, for the presidential elections of 1992 should be understood. G.G. Swell returned the compliment, declared that "the BJP is not a communal party", and was promptly rebuked by the Janata Dal and other so-called champions of the Scheduled Tribes and minorities, including Syed Shahabuddin, Rajmohan Gandhi and others who voted against him (proving that even a tribal belonging to a minority religion will be dumped and abused as soon as he displeases the Islamic-cum-secularist strategists). However, the more probable alternative for the Christian-majority states is to go for full separation from India, to set up an independent Christian state which can appeal to international bodies for help. By the time this state is born, the conflict between Islam and the West may have sharpened, and American troops can be invited to be stationed under the UN flag and defend *Brachin* against the Islamic infiltrators.

For the last two decades, the Christian strategists have kept the separatist fire low and have concentrated on more constructive methods. Non-separatist strategies are in operation, and in some areas milder forms of political autonomy are still on the agenda. Further, there is a deeper social separatism, comparable with the social separatism inculcated among Muslims by the *tabligh* movement. One does not have to read very deep between the lines, to see this separatist thrust on the background of much Christian activity.

Thus, an innocent little article says: "*Church plan for Madhya Pradesh tribal liberation.* About 200 tribal leaders from different parishes of the diocese of Raigarh in Madhya Pradesh met at Kunkuri on Oct 3 and 4 to chalk out future strategies to bring about socio-economic progress, political awareness and unity among the tribals."[74] The spokesman was Fr. Habil Kujur, diocesan director of the Catholic Sabha. Nobody minds people assembling to chalk out strategies for "socio-economic progress". But the term "political awareness" requires some specification. Some of that is already given in the third item, "unity among the tribals": for those who can

[74] *Dalit Voice*, 1/12/1987.

read, it means "unity among the tribals against the non-tribals, meaning the Hindus". It also means "unity of converted and non-converted tribals, to take the latter out of the Hindu and into the Christian sphere of influence".

What also surprises the Western reader in the quoted news item, is that these tribal leaders come from "parishes", not from villages or towns or districts. The secular mode of geographical identification has given way to the clerical mode. This is one of those small indicators of how the Church takes total control in converted areas, and how it imposes a clerical right of intervention in secular matters. For another such indication: I learned from good sources how a philosophy teacher in one of the Christian-dominated universities of the North-East was prohibited from teaching about atheism, not to endanger the students' belief in the satanic nature of this ideological aberration. In certain pockets of India, the Church is resuming a totalitarian role which it has fortunately lost in the West.

The political tendency to separatism starts at the grass-roots level with the cleavage which the missions work within the tribal commmunities. This cleavage is evident in the life rituals, as J. Troisi testifies about the Santals: "While among the non-Christians the most important part of the marriage ceremony is the *Sindradan*, or smearing the bride's forehead with vermillion, among the Christians the exchange of rings by bride and groom marks them as husband and wife. The applying of *sindoor* [= vermillion] is tabooed." The clean break is also in evidence in the funaral rites, in spite of the missionaries' polemical claim that tribals and Christians have nearly the same view of death and the afterlife: "In the funerary ceremonies, there is little trace of non-Christian customs and modes of thought."

According to Troisi, "the converts are, by and large, being alienated from their village communities. Moreover, converts also become estranged from their own kinsfolk. They are prohibited by their own religion from taking part in the ritual offerings and ceremonies [for the ancestral and other deities]. These ritual practices and ceremonies... act as a strong unifying force among the household and family members."[75] The change in religion similarly brings about changes in food habits and many other socially important aspects of life, so that the Christians automatically form a sepa-

[75] J. Troisi: *op.cit.*, p.270.

rate community, breaking the age-old bonds of tribal solidarity: "Cutting themselves off from many aspects of their old community life, the converts find themselves members of a new community, the Christian community."[76]

Lately, the Catholics have adopted a policy of inculturation in order to make conversion less abrupt. This policy has been fairly successful, attracting both non-converts and Protestant converts to Catholicism. But the basic situation remains the same: the Christian community is separate from what we may call the *cultural adivasis*. Friends of mine who have worked in tribal areas of Mexico, Brazil and New Guinea, tell the same story: mission equals internal quarrels and the break-up of social cohesion.

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf reports that "missionary influence has eroded much of the tribes' cultural heritage, which was inseparably linked with the traditional mythology, beliefs and rituals, and wilted when these were abandoned. Above all, the conversion of part of a community tends to destroy the social unity of the whole tribe."[77]

For instance, the Nishi tribe in the North-East finds that in Christian mission schools "a good many Nishi youths have been converted to Christianity. This in itself need not have created any difficulty, for Nishis, like most tribals, are not greatly concerned about the beliefs of their fellow-tribesmen, and if the Christian converts had been equally tolerant, their rejection of traditional Nishi religion might have been ignored by the great mass of conservative tribesmen. However, the converts seem to have been lacking in tolerance and tact, and educated young men of villages affected by the ideological split to whom I spoke in 1980 complained bitterly that Christians deliberately disrupted the harmony of community life. They allegedly refuse to share the houses of adherents of the old faith, and this meant that old parents were abandoned by their converted children, who claimed that they could not stay in dwellings where 'devils' were worshipped... My informants insisted that the missions encouraged the establishment of separate settlements for Christians, and that the Christians refused to participate in village festivals, thereby demonstrating their dissociation from the tribal community. It was alleged, moreover, that converts, not satisfied with this symbolic withdrawal from vil-

[76] *ibid.*, p.271.
[77] C. von Fürer-Haimendorf: *op.cit.*, p.319.

lage life, went a step further by abusing and physically attacking priests as they invoked the gods in the performance of traditional Nishi rituals."[78]

Sometimes the arrogant Christians do not get away with it like that: "Enraged by such interference with hallowed religious practices, some Nishi youths took the offensive and destroyed some huts used by Christians for their prayer meetings." Such incidents are subsequently used by missionaries to send heart-rending tales of persecution and martyrdom to the home-front. They throw much light on the entire history of martyrdom: in our childhood, we still got to read those stories of Christian martyrs in the Roman empire, Black Africa, or indeed India, but without the background information of what these "poor missionaries" had done to incur the wrath of otherwise tolerant populations. (The same thing counts for Mohammed's early preaching in Mecca: after showering a lot of abuse and disruption on Pagan community life, he provoked a reaction which Muslim historiography, unchallenged by the version of the annihilated Pagans, has described as a persecution.) At any rate, such stories still have the desired effect: donations for our heroic missionaries.

And this is the result: "Nishi teachers at the government high-school in Yazali, who were members of a youth organization formed to promote traditional tribal culture, told me how frustrated they were because they could not match the large sums lavished by the missions on propaganda which is undermining the old Nishi life-style. The missionaries... allegedly pay young Nishis to spread Christianity in their home villages, and a commission of Rs. 200 is said to be paid to any convert who induces another Nishi to embrace Christianity. Whatever the rights and the wrongs of the case may be, it is widely believed that there are young Nishis who, after having left mission schools, live in comfortable circumstances without holding any official position or engaging in any normal occupation..."

And yet, not every type of religious development or adoption of new religious practices need be the result of greedy mission campaigns nor lead to social separatism: "The conflict created by the impact of Christianity on the Nishis of the Subansiri district stands in striking contrast to the developments in the neighbouring

[78] *ibid.*, p.307.

Kameng district, where tribal groups such as the Khovas have come under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism... Among the Khovas there is a spontaneous trend towards Tibetan Buddhism; in two villages small *gompa* are under construction, and the villagers have invited Monpa lamas to perform Buddhist rituals... Unlike the Christian converts among the Nishis, those Khovas who are attracted to Buddhism do not opt out of the social life of their community and continue to participate in the traditional tribal rituals. In the same way the Sherdukpens combine their adherence to Mahayana Buddhism with the communal worship of tribal deities... Among the Monpas too, elements of the ancient Bon religion coexist with the dominant Buddhist faith, and the practice of both religions within the same communities has not sparked off any conflicts comparable to those which threaten to destroy the social fabric of Nishis affected by religious rivalries."[79]

In 1967, the following amendment to the Constitution was proposed in parliament by Kartik Oraon, a tribal Congress MP from Ranchi: "No person who has given up the tribal faith or faiths and has embraced either Christianity or Islam should be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Tribe." As we have just seen, it is a fact that tribal converts drop out of tribal community life, and effectively cease to be members of their tribes. The Christian practice of cornering benefits meant for tribals in spite of their social separatism and denunciation of tribal customs (and of demanding similar benefits for Christians of Scheduled Caste origin, in spite of propaganda saying that Christianity offers a caste-free existence), is unacceptable to the genuine members of the communities concerned.

Mr. Oraon explained: "The Christian tribals have taken all the reserved positions for themselves in the colleges and government service. The Christian missions have spent crorees of rupees on the Christian tribals and built schools for them, so why should the government give them grants for their schools while the non-Christians get nothing? The government is actually supporting missionary work by giving their schools grants. In fact, why should anyone be allowed to propagate religion? When you propagate one religion, it means you must attack other religions, and that leads to hatred of one group by another. The Christians dominate everything here. They have dominated the politics of the tribal people

[79] *ibid.*, pp.307-308.

through the Jharkhand party. Jharkhand is a Christian party, and their prupose is to keep the non-Christians down. When the government provides all these benefits, it's the Christians who get them. If the government reserved one hundred jobs, the Christians got them all."[80]

Meanwhile, Hindu organizations like the *Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram* have started to respond to social and educational needs which the missionaries had used as entries into tribal society (it is funny to read the missionaries' indignant reports about these competitors' efforts in social service and education: they do not seem to realize that the "fanatical Hindu fundamentalist missionaries" are giving them a look in the mirror). Still, the Christian power position in the tribal areas is very strong, and the government policy of extending benefits meant for tribals to people who actually disrupt the tribal communities, continues to strengthen their hand.

There should be more communication between India and the West, to undercut the retrogressive developments brought about by the mission. People in India's tribal belts as well as in Kerala and Tamil Nadu should hear about the decline of the Church and the criticism of Christian doctrine (often based on the theologians' own Bible research) which have taken place in the West. And modern Christians in the West should be informed about the power-hungry and obscurantist Church policies on which their donation money is being spent. It is only by keeping the sponsors as well as the recipients of Church proselytization uninformed (or selectively informed) about the other end of the donation chain, that the mission centres can continue their large-scale strategy to subvert Hindu society.

Most European Christians nowadays are very mild people, who don't believe in a struggle against other religions anymore. In the 1960s, they came to believe that the people in the Third World did not need Bibles, but material development. So we got "development theology". In the 1970s, they were taught that what the people in the Third World need is not religion, that opium of the people, but social and political "liberation". So we got "liberation theology". In the 1980s, the religious dimension came back: converts in the Third World were tired of their pastors' political babble, and wanted to do real religion with real celebrations, separate from

[80] M. Weiner: *Sons of the Soil*, pp.184-85.

the worldly business of politics. But by then, the belief in Christianity's unique power of Salvation had diminished even more than the number of churchgoers. Even many Christians now support the right of the Native Americans to rediscover their own religious traditions.

When the last Flemish missionaries, survivors of a once-glorious mission saga, come home on holiday and give the typical arguments against other religions to justify the effort to replace them with Christianity ("Buddhism is introverted and passive", "African religions contain unhealthy superstitions and witchcraft"), people retort that in that case, one may help the people concerned to get over their fatalism and superstition, but without imposing or selling the belief in Jesus.[81] Generally, if the missions are justified by claiming that they spread certain *values* and render certain *services*, the modern reply is that these values can be promoted and these services rendered for their own sake, without attaching a belief system to it. In the old days, it would be said that only Christianity can be a sufficient basis for values like charity etc., but by now, everybody realizes that people of any denomination can be charitable, socially active, concerned for their fellow-men etc.

On his visit to the Dominican Republic in October 1992, to commemorate Columbus' landing in America, the Pope declared that the Church had done the native Americans wrong, that he begged their forgiveness, and that he acknowledged their right to their own culture; but he added that the Church will continue to struggle against evil customs — which may mean anything from non-Christian religions to black magic and sexual licentiousness. Even the Pope no longer frankly declares that Christianity must replace the other religions beause it is the only true religion: he hides behind a non-specific "struggle against evil", a commitment to certain values on which non-Christians can also agree. The first missionaries in America too had already justified their mission campaign with the need to eradicate human sacrifice (on top of the then-common belief that non-Christians would go to hell and needed Salvation by any means: "Compel them to come in", in Saint Luke's and Saint Augustine's words). Now we know that the

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[81] The anti-missionary arguments are analyzed in V. Neckebrouck: *De Stomme Duivelen. Het anti-missionair syndroom in de Westerse Kerk* (Dutch: "The mute devils. The anti-missionary syndrome in the Western Church"), Tabor, Brugge 1990.

practice of human sacrifice has been eradicated in many countries without Christianity's intervention, e.g. in China's official cult it was routinely practised during the Shang period (2nd millennium BC) but disappeared in the subsequent Zhou period.

Modern knowledge discredits the Christian claim of being the sole guardian of humane values and the exclusive bearer of the Truth, and many Christians now accept that other religious traditions have an equal right to exist. That is not to say, relativistically, that all religious traditions are equal (as some mindless and exalted speakers of the Ramakrishna Mission, the Bahai faith and other New Age movements contend): they are not, and the step from, say, animal sacrifice to vegetarianism, or from belief to knowledge, or from attachment to the letter of Scripture to an understanding of its spirit, is not merely *change* but constitutes real *progress*. Therefore, we can have sympathy for the many sincere missionaries who genuinely believed that they had to bring the light to people living in darkness. Many Hindus and Buddhists are grateful that long ago, *brahmanas* and *shramanas* gave up the comfort of their homestead to go and spread their culture. If the Russians could recently celebrate the 1000th anniversary of Russia's forced christianization, Indians have as much reason to be happy about the gradual transformation of their culture by Vedanta philosophy, which was at least partly brought about by the efforts of "missionaries" (Shankaracharya not being the first). There is something noble about the resolve to share knowledge and dispel ignorance, which is what the builders of Hindu-Buddhist civilization have done in a less disruptive and obtrusive way than the Islamic and Christian missionaries.

"Spreading the message" need not be a wrong project *per se*; only, now that many Christians have some knowledge about other traditions, they are not so sure anymore about Christianity's superiority, and they are willing to concede to other traditions a place in the sun. Not that they have decided that, say, the practice of human sacrifice which the early missionaries tried to eradicate in America (according to their own reports: human sacrifice was a standard allegation which should not be accepted just like that), is alright after all; but they have understood that there is much more to "Paganism" than the backward traits which the missionaries have always highlighted. In spite of this general trend, Christianity still has frontiersmen who continue to wage war on other religions, and

intone old and new tunes of war propaganda: fundamentalist Churches continue to paint Hinduism and other traditions as the devil's work, while mainstream Churches attack non-Christian traditions as less humane and less conducive to a desirable way of living and of organizing society.

A more detailed and documented study of the subversive machinations of the Christian missionaries (Indians as well as foreigners) would be useful. For instance, the first-hand stories of Christians luring children and illiterate people by means of cheap tricks (so-called miracle cures, or getting the faltering school bus engine going again with the help of a prayer to the Virgin Mary, after a prayer to Ganesha has failed), or of the pressure put on poor people by means of financial sops (if you convert, you don't have to pay the hospital bill), have to be collected and verified. Let no one object that such investigation would be offensive to the Christian community: the more enlightened Christians too feel indignant at these crookeries. Special attention should be given to the involvement of missionaries in separatist and otherwise disruptionist politics. A simple perusal of publicly available official documents and budgets of missionary foundations will already go a long way in exposing the size and planning of the missionary subversion.

3.13. Adivasistan

The main driving force behind the campaign for ethnic separatism of India's "aboriginals" is the World Council of Churches (WCC), which groups most Christian Churches (the Catholic Church has an observer status).

It may be in order to point out firstly that the WCC is a snake with two poisonous teeth, not just one. It is of course continuing the old schemes of subverting non-Christian societies and blackening other religions (except Islam). But on top of that, it has adopted inspiration, rhetoric and tactics from the world Communist movement. When the East European Orthodox Churches joined the WCC in 1961, they were firmly controlled by the Communist regimes, and worked to turn the entire WCC into an instrument of Soviet foreign policy. Since then, the WCC was very active clamouring against injustice in South Africa and other non-communist countries, but remained deaf to the complaints of the persecuted Christians and others in the Soviet block.

The British conservative critic Roger Watson, who has wit-

nessed in his own country how "the cadres of the left-wing establishment have been invading the churches via the British Council of Churches and its myriad satellites, transforming them from within", and who has exposed "the orchestration of 'Christian' responses to the policies of the present Conservative government by a hard-working network of subversive individuals", observes: "Even at face value the World Council of Churches is an extension of the international Communist movement. However, the naive and sentimental are easily persuaded by its spurious talk of peace and brotherhood."[82] The result is that: "There is a widespread assumption in contemporary clerical circles... that Christianity and Socialism are not only compatible but synonymous."

This situation has its parallels in the Catholic Church. The Flemish journalist Paul Beliën reports: "When I had demonstrated, in the *Gazet van Antwerpen* daily, that money of the Catholic charity *Broederlijk Delen* ['brotherly sharing'] was actually given to a Marxist trade-union in the Philippines, the faithful in Antwerp were admonished by the priests in their Sunday sermon not to buy this paper during Lent. Clerical power was used in defence of Communist agitation."[83] Church pressure forced the *Gazet*'s editor to order Beliën to stop his research into the matter. Most remaining Christians in the non-fundamentalist Churches have become so weak-minded that they had no resistance to the leftist intellectual dominance of the past few decades. They have been taken in by cheap but daring slogans like: "Jesus was the first Communist". This leftist influence has created a general prejudice in favour of social conflict, which can readily be adapted from class struggle to ethnic separatism.

On the one hand, fundamentalist Churches are continuing and intensifying the old propaganda, vilifying other religions as "satanic abominations" and trying to impress gullible people with "miracle cures". On the other, the WCC and its allied charities have been supporting leftist causes and financing a number of Communist "liberation movements" (considering the fate of Christians in Com-

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[82] R. Watson: "Church and State", in *The Salisbury Review*, December 1991.

[83] Paul Beliën, quoted by Frans Crols in a review of his book on the politics of abortion (*Abortus, het Grote Taboe*, Roularta, Brussels 1992), a matter in which the Belgian bishops have failed to make any effort to influence the conscience of the decision-making politicians (through sermons or official statements), not by any over-concern for secularism but by their weak-minded submission to intellectual-political fashion; in the Flemish weekly *Trends*, 18/6/1992.

munist countries, that is a good illustration of Lenin's dictum that "the bourgeois will sell us the rope with which we will hang them"). Now that Latin America and Africa have dried up as wells of enthusiasm for Communist liberation struggles, it is quite certain that the overt and covert funding of "liberation struggles" in India has swelled enormously. The point is that, like so many orphaned post-Soviet leftists in the West, the WCC continues to act out the acquired mentality of subversion even after the Marxist rallying-point has been discredited.

While the financial purses and strings and the political levers of the missionary subversion apparatus require some research work to uncover, the propaganda wing of this subversion effort is by definition very visible to whomever cares to look. Now that the ethnic and aboriginal revival is "in", the WCC chooses aboriginal separatism as its main plank of subversion.

In a recent document of the WCC's department of "Ecumenical Action on Racism", we read: "We affirm the growing consciousness of the Indigenous People's struggle for freedom, including those of the Dalits of India."[84] The document cites with approval the arguments of the Indian (now Canadian) Dalit activist Yogesh Varhade: "Historical evidence points to the fact that the Dalits were the original inhabitants of the land which is known as India... They were distinct peoples or nations, possessing distinct cultures, laws and customs very much similar to the Indigenous People of North America. Like them, the Dalits too were overrun by foreign invaders, in this case the Aryans from the West. These Aryan invaders imposed on our people not only their political rule, but also a certain religion hierarchical system [sic] which is part and parcel of the Hindu civilization of India — which is also known as casteism."

The document also claims as evidence: "The archaeologists also tell us that the final disappearance of the people of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa coincided with the coming of the Aryans in 1500 BC... The original inhabitants were made slaves and brought into Hinduism, being placed, of course, on the very lowest rung of the social ladder. Those who did not accept the slave status were driven away, usually into the forests, where they retained their Aboriginal social customs and traditions... On this basis, the Dalit — the Scheduled Tribes and the Scheduled Castes — can be ac-

[84] Long excerpts of the document have been published in *Dalit Voice*, 16/6/1992.

knowledged as the Indigenous People of India."

The document is best read in conjunction with a statement by one of the most active Church dignitaries involved in the "WCC programme to combat racism", the Rev. Bob Scott. The Reverend has no sympathy for the loyalist approach of some of the Indian Christians, who refrain from separatist action and from the concomitant separatist thought pattern: "While the Indian Churches' response was to speak of their support for Dalit people in terms of the Christian response to help 'uplift the poor', the WCC very clearly went beyond that. At a public meeting that followed, I deliberately began my speech by paying my respects to the Indigenous people of India."[85]

One reason why many Indian Christians refrain from the pro-Indigenous rhetoric of the WCC (and from the implied anti-India policies), is that they are aware of their own non-Indigenous provenance, either as so-called Saint Thomas Christians (immigrants from Syria and Iran in the 4th and 5th centuries AD), or as partly Portuguese-descended (as evidenced by the Portuguese family names common among Indian Christians: D'Souza, Alva, Fernandes). Also, many of them are sincere Indian patriots, and see no point in the WCC-inspired subversion in the tribal areas. They have a cool and factual look at the tribal situation, and they see a serious social problem there, a conflict between groups at different stages of socio-economic development, but not a conflict between "natives" and "invaders". This is not liked by rabble-rousers like Rev. Scott, who insists on making it a conflict between the Aryan invaders' Indian state and the Indigenous nations claiming their rightful self-determination.

Citing a resolution adopted by the WCC Canberra session (February 1991), Rev. Scott affirms: "WCC highlighted a new indigenous peoples' struggle for international recognition of their sovereignty, self-determination, traditional religious practices and land rights... We affirm the growing consciousness of indigenous peoples' struggles for freedom, including those of the Dalits of India." Remark once more how the "Indigenous" peoples of India are getting specially mentioned: pro-indigenous movements in christianized lands like the Americas can easily turn anti-Christian (in spite of Church efforts to co-opt them), but in India the Churches expect to gain from them.

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[85] Published in *Dalit Voice*, 16/7/1992.

Rev. Scott claims as his own the passage already quoted from the WCC document: "Dalits, the original inhabitants were made slaves... On this basis, the Dalit, the Scheduled Tribes and Schedules Castes can be acknowledged as the Indigenous People of India." It is important to know that the WCC gives a free hand to an accomplished enemy of India's integrity. On behalf of the WCC, Rev. Scott is also lobbying in the UN and among donor agencies to make them adopt a similar attitude: consider India as the country of the SC/ST aboriginals stolen by Hindu foreign invaders.

All this insistence on the status of the tribals (and the ex-untouchables) as "indigenous", has specific political implications. This status brings the Indian tribals in the same category as the "indigenous peoples" of America and Oceania, and for them, the WCC has a declared policy of political separatism, laid down in the Darwin Declaration of May 1989. In this declaration, "the Churches confess to having been part of the problem and rise to become part of the solution, in keeping with the principles of the Gospel": an obvious way to move over from the side of the former winners and oppressors (side on which the Churches had to be in order to achieve the numerical strength which they now represent) to the side of tomorrow's possible winners, the reviving aboriginal peoples.

The declaration includes the following political programme: "...(4) Indigenous peoples strive for and demand the full spectrum of autonomy available in the principle of self-determination, including the right to re-establish our own nation-states, independent of the jurisdiction of our invaders and their accompanying political structures. (5) Indigenous peoples shall control our own institutions of government, our economies and our social and legal structures. (6) The Churches and governments have an obligation to see Points 4 and 5 come to reality by providing the necessary means, without any restriction attached."[86]

So now, under the cover of the legitimate movement of the indigenous peoples, the WCC can almost openly and with a very good conscience work for the separation of tribal areas from India.

3.14. Genuine federalism

In a discussion of the autonomy claims of tribal communities, it

[86] Published in *Link*, the bimonthly newsletter of the WCC's "programme to combat racism", number 4 of 1989.

should be clear from the beginning that there is nothing against a re-drawing of the *pradesh* boundaries within India. There is no reason why the tribals should be ruled from Patna rather than from Ranchi, or from Guwahati rather than from Shillong or Kohima. On the other hand, reorganization of states is not always the solution: if the intention is to give every tribe a state (*pradesh*), one problem is that many of them are not in a majority even in their heartland, often since centuries, so that the creation of new provinces may not give them the political autonomy they want. In that case, only *sui generis* formulas of non-territorial autonomy over certain matters can solve the problem.

Part of the solution for the "grievances" of many smaller communities lies in what is known as the subsidiarity principle: a given political authority should rest with the lowest possible level of social organization capable of handling it. In simple terms: power should be decentralized and vested in regional and local bodies as much as possible. This principle was articulated by the Catholic theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas, as a safeguard against the hybris of kings and governments. In this century, it was taken up in the Papal Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), but also, independently from the former sources and without using the term, by Mahatma Gandhi.

Modernists among the founding fathers of the Indian Republic, especially Jawaharlal Nehru, despised Gandhi's concern for decentralization, and favoured a Soviet-inspired centralization of political power and economic initiative. Nearly half a century of independence have taught that, in this respect at least, the Mahatma was right: people should be made to participate in decision-making and public initiative as closely as possible, and power should be devolved to regions and villages.

In my view, an important part of the problem is that the reasonable demands for tribal autonomy, as well as the objections to them, are formulated in terms of nationalism: all-India nationalism versus Bodo nationalism, Mizo nationalism etc. Everybody is clamouring for a nation-state, but some say that "India" is a nation-state for the "Indian" nation, while others say that India is "a prisonhouse of nations", and that a genuine nation-state would be called Dravida Nadu, or Greater Mizoram, or Azad Jharkhand. This problem cannot be solved without some fundamental thinking on the concept of "nation", and on alternative but related concepts.

It may be shocking for many Indians, both secularists and "Hindu nationalists", to question the validity of Indian nationalism. Few Indians want to put India's unity and integrity in doubt. Since 1947, India has effectively been giving a measure of protection to Hinduism against Islam and against at least the crudest form of Communism. In spite of its anti-Hindu policies and its non-performance in defending Hindus in some neighbouring countries and in Kashmir, it is at least allowing Hinduism a lot more freedom than it would have under an Islamic regime. That is one practical reason why most Hindus are passionate India-patriots. Of course, I will not argue against the desirability of Indian unity: India, for all its defects, is a beacon of light in a continent of Chinese Communism, Tibetan genocide, socialist militarism in Myanmar, Islamic fanaticism in Pakistan and Bangladesh, ethnic chauvinism in Sri Lanka. However, it is a conceptual and strategic mistake to formulate loyalty to India in terms of the modern Western creed called nationalism.

Nationalism can have positive contents, in that it transcends sectarian and class antagonisms. Thus, Iranian nationalism under the Pehlevi dynasty has led to a revaluation of the national Zoroastrian heritage, and given a lot more freedom and facilities to the remaining Zoroastrians. This policy was abandoned by the anti-nationalist Ayatollah regime, which also stopped the policy of language purism (coining new or re-employing old Iranian words instead of Arabic loan-words) and other expressions of Iranian rather than Islamic pride. In the Indian context, the term "nationalism" is often used in this positive sense: putting the national interest before private and sectarian interests.

But nationalism involves more than a stand against divisive policies. To understand its historical appearance, we have to shift from India's border zones and tribal belts to Europe, where nationalism became the norm after defeating the medieval transnational order, which can still give us some inspiration for an alternative to nationalism.

Modern nationalism is a gift of the French Revolution (1789). This revolution is usually praised as the bringer of "liberty, equality and fraternity", which slogan is still applauded by many without a second thought. We readily grant that the French Revolution has contributed to lasting achievements like the principle of equal opportunity and the abolition of slavery, but that is not our topic

here, nor are the criticisms it has received (starting with Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, the basis of modern Conservatism). What concerns us here, is the effect of the French Revolution on our sense of belonging to a community, esp. nationhood.

The French Revolution replaced religion as the first focus of man's loyalty with the "nation", meaning the state. The shift was exemplified by the substitution of the national anthem for the morning prayer, in schools, town council sessions, etc. An important instrument for popularizing this re-orientation of mentalities was the conscription, the mobilization of all able-bodied male citizens into the national army, which replaced the professional and mercenary armies where access to the higher levels had long been a privilege of the nobility. The French state was to be the only focus of loyalty: intermediate levels of social organization were abolished. Professional corporations were forbidden, traditional provinces were abolished and replaced with a "rational" division in equal-size departments, religious institutions were expropriated or abolished, all languages except French were suppressed. Education was uniformized and solely provided and regulated by the state. Till today, France has essentially remained faithful to these principles, and they have been emulated in different degrees by many modern states.

One of the parties in the Revolutionary Assembly, the Jacobins, got the upper hand in 1793. Their reign lasted for just one year, but they created a mould that was to be repeated in many countries in the next two centuries: the centralized and homogenizing state, and the use of terror ("purification" by a "people's court") against anyone standing in the way of the state's total control.

Like in later revolutions (e.g. that of the Khmer Rouge), history was also taken care of: enormous amounts of cultural heritage reminiscent of religion and feudalism were destroyed, and the Gregorian calendar was replaced with the Revolutionary calendar, with weeks of 10 days (a more "rational" number than that mystical 7), and starting all over with the year One. In spite of the formulation of a "declaration of rights of man and of the citizen" (or with its help, because it was directed against the power of intermediate institutions like the family and the Church as much as against the abuse of state power), the state effectively became a totalitarian entity with unlimited power over the naked individual. In many

ways, the French revolution prefigured Stalinism. Its anthem, *la Marseillaise*, served as the anthem of the socialist movement until *l'Internationale* was composed; it is full of chauvinism, class hatred and contempt for foreigners ("impure blood").[87]

As contemporary observers including Hegel have noted, it was the abolition of the intermediate and organic levels of social organization that inevitably led to the Terror (1793-94). The Terror included the massacre of several hundreds of thousands of Catholic loyalists in the Vendée region and the execution of a number of revolutionary leaders by their own comrades ("The revolution is like the god Saturn: it eats its own children"). The essence of Stalinism and Maoism was already there.

Just as inevitably, French nationalism became expansive and the Revolutionary armies conquered neighbouring countries (including my own; the Catholic peasantry started a guerrilla war with the motto: *Voor outer en heerd*, "for altar and hearth"). The conquest of frontier territories was justified with the *ad hoc* doctrine of "natural borders": the area south and west of the Rhine and west of the Alps was annexed in order to achieve the "natural borders". Even beyond that, the French nationalist armies went for conquest, after Napoleon had taken power. Napoleon abolished much of the antics of the Revolution and re-instituted the monarchy, but he remained a French Jacobin chauvinist, convinced that France had a message which it had to impose on its neighbours. It would lead him to the defeats in Russia, Leipzig and Waterloo.

An extremely significant event in the imposition of French nationalist hegemony over parts of Europe was the abolition of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. Founded in 1232, in the tradition of Charlemagne's *Imperium Romanorum* (coronation by the Pope in AD 800), i.e. with a claim to the mantle of the original Roman Empire after its christianization, the Holy Roman Empire had been a unique decentralized political entity presided over by an elective monarchy (with seven local rulers as Electors). Though the heyday

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[87] It is instructive to compare the French and the German anthems. The latter, starting with *Deutschland über Alles* ("Germany above everything") is often understood as a song of self-praise and imperialism; in fact it is a poetic song extolling German unity above regional particularism. While the *Marseillaise* is directed against outsiders and what leftist rabble-rousers call "enemies of the people", the *Deutschlandlied* is directed against divisiveness. Though it belongs to 19th-century nationalism, it is still transparent of the spirit of the Empire. Recently, a gentler rewriting of the Marseillaise's lyrics was proposed but rejected in the name of national tradition.

of the Empire was long gone, and though the Vienna-based Habsburg dynasty, of which many members had worn the crown of the H.R. Empire, was not removed from power and continued at the helm of its multi-national empire until 1918, Napoleon attached great importance to the H.R. Empire's formal abolition. The reason is that the Holy Roman Empire was the very antithesis of the new secular conception of the nation-state, and especially of post-Revolutionary France.

The Empire was a multi-national state, or rather a union of states, in which no attempt at homogenization was made. It had a weak centre (which was its great weakness, but the subject nations liked it that way). It had a religious dimension, which did not prevent some member states from turning Protestant in the 16th century. Neither democratic nor totalitarian, it was the epitome of feudalism, with its patchwork of duchies, marches (frontier fiefs), prince-bishoprics, leagues of free cities, and with its co-existence of different law systems. It fostered no national consciousness: Latin was the common language for most serious matters (while France imposed linguistic unity from above, the German language was standardized spontaneously by Luther's Bible translation), rulers appointed assistents regardless of their nationality, princes married "foreign" princesses and made the nobility into a biologically and culturally all-European class.

France had often been the H.R. Empire's enemy. Creating a national political identity with the treacherous take-over by Hugues Capet from the last Carolingian[88] in 991, France had been firmly separate and steadily working towards homogenization, with a first peak in the royal absolutism of the dynamic king Louis XIV. From the devastation of Germany in the Thirty Years' War to Voltaire's quip that "the Holy Roman Empire was neither Holy, nor Roman, nor Empire", pre-Revolutionary France had been true to its status as the Empire's natural enemy. With the French Revolution, that deep-rooted opposition had acquired a new ideological dimension.

The "sovereignty of the people" led to an awareness of national identity that proved incompatible with the principle of a multi-national commonwealth. In the latter, one nation could be dominant (e.g. it could have its language accepted as *lingua*

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[88] Charles of France, the last nominal ruler of the house of Charlemagne, happens to be the founder of Brussels (979 AD), the city destined to become united Europe's first capital.

franca), but it would not interfere in the other nations' internal affairs. In a nation-state however, the dominant nation would not only interfere, it would go as far as obliterating the very existence of the other nations, by forced assimilation or worse. Liberal democracy created the problem of the minorities, which felt that democratic majority rule could not possibly give them a fair deal, and which were consequently distrusted by the majority and pressured into full assimilation by the homogeneity-oriented state.

When Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV of Luxemburg-Böhmen was crowned, in 1355, he promulgated a kind of constitution, the Golden Bull, which said: "The Holy Roman Empire consists of different nations, with their own traditions and customs and their respective languages and law codes." The Emperor himself spoke German, Czech, Hungarian, Italian, French and Latin. This was the very opposite of the ideal of a monolithic and monolingual nation-state which animated European nationalists after the French Revolution. The German "Second *Reich*" (Empire), founded in 1871, was not intended as an imitation of the original Empire (though it still retained some of its decentralizing features), but as the long-expected German nation-state, on the Jacobin model. Hitler's Third *Reich* finally managed to forge a homogeneous nation-state and to give expression to the most grotesque consequences of the Jacobin ideal.

Now that Europe is trying to forge a new trans-national unity, the model of the Holy Roman Empire is being rediscovered with great interest. Of course, nobody wants to re-introduce feudalism and coronations of rulers by the Pope, but many sensible people do want an alternative model to the dangerous model of state-nationalism. The break-up of Yugoslavia, where homogeneous nation-states could not be created without massacre and mass deportation (unlike Czechoslovakia, where a neat carve-up was possible), has made a rethinking of nationalism and of alternative integration models urgent.

Moreover, it has proven the bad conscience of Jacobin nationalists: the European Community was unable to play a constructive role in the Yugoslav problem, because its Jacobin member states refused to face the inevitable and identified a Slovene or Croat break-away with a future break-away of their own minority regions like Corsica or Brittony, Wales or Scotland. When they could no longer prevent the independence of the Slovenes and Croats, they

retreated to the next state-nationalist line of defence: maintaining the intra-Yugoslav borders, eventhough these did not reflect ethnic realities (in fact, the Croat Communist Tito drew them deliberately in such a way as to divide and humiliate the Serbs).

Even more pressing on the public consciousness is the ethnic complexity of parts of the former Soviet Union, where the model of the nation-state is bound to create great difficulties, especially because nationalists have a way of looking up the historical map of the time when their own country was at its largest. What we need is a model that allows nations to live together in a common political system, such that even the smallest nation need not fear its neighbours.

The break-up of Jacobin states like France and Spain should not terrify us when it only amounts to a redrawing of intra-European borders. The Basques do not want to break away from the European Community, they merely want to be recognized as a member-nation on a par with the French and Spanish nations. This is perfectly reasonable, and the Empire model provides for such an ethnic restructuring.

Opposed to this search for a supra-national Empire model are two types of Jacobin state-nationalism. On the one hand, there are those who stick to the now-existing states, which in their view should not surrender any sovereignty to the European level, nor to lower, regional levels. The most outspoken example is France, where the extreme-rightist Jean-Marie Le Pen, during his campaign against the Maastricht Treaty (which, for all its shortcomings, means a big step towards a political rather than just an economic Europe), has said: "All through its history, France has been the European exception. During more than 1,000 years, France has prevented Europe from achieving its unity. When the chips are down, that is its role. France has always been the opponent of the Empire."[89] Incidentally, Le Pen himself comes from Brittony but doesn't speak its Celtic language, thus exemplifying the destructive homogenization of his beloved French state. What he fears is that a unified Europe will do to France what France has done to Brittony.

And he has a point, because on the other hand, there are the European nationalists, who want to create a homogeneous Europe where all these burdensome linguistic and cultural differences will

[89] Speech in La Baule, Brittony, reported in *Le Monde*, 28/8/1992.

be suppressed and wiped out. Whether consciously or not, the European Community bureaucracy is working towards that type of Europe. International business interests also see it that way: they do not like to deal with different regulations in different countries, much less to put translations of the user's instructions on their products as required by the laws of these hindersome small countries. The weekly paper *The European*, founded by the mega-swindler Robert Maxwell, is clearly based on this vision of a single European state with English as a single official language. It once had the effrontery of publishing an appeal for the abolition of the state of Luxemburg, because such small states are an administrative stand-in-the-way, disturbing the comfort of the bureaucracy, and worst of all, they constitute a justifying reference for autonomy movements of other small nations.

Against these two Jacobin nationalisms, that of the member states and that of the European super-state, the alternative is provided by a modern and democratic version of the Empire model. Its chief characteristics are the following:[90]

1. *Organic, differentiated federalism*. Federalism means that sovereignty is divided between different political levels, such that the parts have a degree of autonomy. This decentralized system is the best to do justice to complex social realities. The Empire federalism is: (a) *differentiated* (or, with a term that risks attracting suspicion, *non-egalitarian*), which means that the member states (which Indians call *pradesh*) can have a different status depending on size, composition, historical heritage; (b) *asymmetric*, which means that the member states can organize their internal political system differently, i.e. they are autonomous not only in what they decide, but also in how they decide (unlike the Jacobin uniformity, which is imposed for the comfort of the rulers but does injustice to the peculiar situations in member states); (c) *organic*, meaning not based on artificial divisions but starting from genuine ethnic and cultural historical realities.

2. *Complementarity principle*. As opposed to the subsistence ideal of the Jacobin nationalists, which want the state to be a self-contained and self-sufficient unit, the members of the Empire need

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[90] See Luc Pauwels: *Maastricht, ja toch. Over de lange weg van de liberale EEG naar de Europese Rijksgedachte* (Dutch: "Maastricht treaty, yes, after all. On the long road from the liberalist European Economic Community towards the European Empire concept"), in *Teksten Kommentaren en Studies*, 1992/3.

each other and are complimentary in many ways. Modern life imposes a process of transcending the self-contained national units in matters of transport, ecology, migration management, etc. Their belonging to the greater union is not conditional, is not a contract respected by the members as long as it is in their national self-interest: it is a matter of *Bundestreue* ("faithfulness to the union"), of realizing that the member is only complete when it is a functioning part of the whole. That is the difference between a confederacy, where the members can opt out, and a federation, where membership is no longer negotiable after accession. Of course, a federation can only work when the members have a fundamental sense of belonging-together, of a basic cultural unity (e.g. if the European Community is to be more than a Common Market, Turkey cannot become a member unless it becomes culturally European).

3. *Subsidiarity principle*. It is not enough to institute different levels of decision-making, one also has to choose which decision is taken at which level. Policy should never be made at a level higher than strictly necessary. Lower levels should only devolve powers to a higher level when this is necessary, i.e. when only the higher level is capable of solving a given type of problem efficiently and impartially. The Catholic political philosophy formulated by Saint Thomas Aquinas adopted the subsidiarity doctrine from the actually existing Empire, which was built on ancient Roman and Germanic traditions.

It will be clear from this list of defining characteristics that the Empire concept is radically different from what is called, with a related term, Imperialism. Evidently, we have a terminological problem here: some empires in history did not have the features that make up the Empire concept as outlined above. Napoleon crowned himself emperor, but his empire was conceived as an extended Jacobin nation-state. Similarly, the Soviet Union, though formally a confederacy, was a homogenizing centralized state, in which the non-Russian Stalin enforced a russification policy. The original Roman Empire, to which the Holy Roman Empire claimed a successor status, was of course a centralized state, but it did accept the legal and religious traditions of the nations under its jurisdiction; only when Christianity became the state religion did it impose uniformity. Earlier, the Persian empire, in contrast to the preceding Assyrian empire, followed a benevolent and pluralist policy. Though a bully (Cyrus I) had been necessary to create the

empire in the first place, the mature empire was a peaceful zone of pluralist co-existence. The challenge before us is to create a voluntary Empire without bullies.

In Hindu political thought, the federalist model (which we have been calling the Empire model in the European context) is amply provided for.

To start with a somewhat gory instance from the earliest antiquity: the Vedic horse-sacrifice (*ashvamedha*) was a ritual calculated to generate a supra-tribal or supra-national political structure. When the horse was left to roam freely, every king in whose territory the horse entered was called upon to accede to the empire which the sacrificing king was establishing. The latter would be recognized as suzerain, the former become his vassal. There was no forcible incorporation of his domain in the new empire, no military occupation, which does not mean that it was an idyllic arrangement of the Golden Age: if the sacrificing king was not accepted as suzerain by a local ruler, he had to invade and conquer the latter's territory. The mores were not as refined as we might hope for, but at least, after some initial bullying, a feudal type of federalism was established. Moreover, even if the ambitious king had forcibly subdued a country, he had to install a son of the local dynasty as the new ruler, sacrifice before the country's national gods, and respect the prevalent customs of the new member-state of his empire.

The classical model of Hindu federalism starts from the smallest units, the local community which, like the individual, has its own characteristics or *swabhava*. In accordance with these, it establishes its own norm system, *swadharma*. If it maintains its own norm system, it has autonomy, *swarajya*. The incorporation of these autonomous units into a larger system is an empire, *samrajya*. This word, like the word *Empire*, is dangerous in that it can have two nearly opposite meanings: its literal meaning "together-kingdom", *federation*; and the less elevated sense of *imperialism*. In the monarchic views of antiquity, the *samrajya* was understood as having a "universal monarch" at its centre, the *chakravartin*. Only the ruler who respects the customs and institutions of the constituent units of his *samrajya*, is a *chakravartin*.

This model gives expression at the political level to the two values which Mahatma Gandhi rightly considered the most fundamental to Hindu Dharma: truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*).

Non-violence should not be reduced to the morbid christianized meaning which the Mahatma had given to it (turn the other cheek, achieve victory by dying), but should be understood in its larger meaning: respect all existing entities, do not obstruct their natural development, do not trample their particular genius. It is this *ahimsa*, this universal respect which a *samrajya* observes vis-a-vis its constituent parts. In this case, the effect of *ahimsa* is equivalent with that of *satya*: let the intellectual construct reflect reality, let the *samrajya*'s constitution reflect the ethnic, linguistic and historical reality of its member communities. It should not only reflect their differences, but also their underlying unity: the required loyalty of the member communities to the *samrajya* must have a basis in cultural realities.

To be sure, this is only a very elementary outline of what a Hindu political philosophy may contribute to a working federal system for modern India. But already, it identifies some elements in India's present-day political structure that will need to be changed.

For instance, the definition article in the Constitution, "India is a Union of States", does not reflect the historical reality of India's cultural unity. It could be a fitting definition of a temporary confederacy of separate states with no cultural kinship and merely an accidental common interest to bring them together. Historically, it reflects the view of (some of) the British rulers that India was a plurality of nations and cultures only united by colonialism; and the self-flattery of Jawaharlal Nehru c.s., who saw themselves as the "makers of India" out of a conglomerate of disparate components acidentally brought together by the common colonial experience.

By contrast, Mahatma Gandhi never saw himself as the "Father of the Nation", but as the son of Mother India, and he firmly believed that her cultural unity was millennia old and formed the basis upon which the British could establish a unified colonial administration. The definition of India as a "Union of States" and a "nation in the making" is based upon false history and cultural illiteracy, and carries within it the germs of separatism.

Coming to the subject of tribal autonomy, we may consider one of the possible viewpoints: the French President F. Mitterrand, while formulating his viewpoint on the Yugoslav problem, has declared that "we cannot allow every tribe to have its own state". What he as a Jacobin meant was of course that he did not intend to

let his own "tribes", the Brittons, Basques, Corsicans etc., escape from under French rule, and that he would consequently show his solidarity with other regimes who keep "tribes" down. Nevertheless, the principle that you cannot allow just any community to declare itself a nation entitled to a separate nation-state, does make sense.

For a more untainted voice, let us hear Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's view on the tribal problem, expressed in his seminal article *Rebuilding Russia*: "The deliberately deceptive and mendacious Soviet system nonetheless contains some elements that have validity if they are honestly applied. One of those is the Soviet (= council) of Nationalities, a forum at which even the smallest of national groups can have its voice heard. The present hierarchical structure is also justified: 'Union Republics' first, followed by 'Autonomous Republics', then 'Autonomous Oblasts' and 'National Okrugs'. The numerical weight of a people must not be ignored, disregarding this factor is the road to chaos: the UN might be able to subsist in this fashion, but not a viable state."[91]

It is not reflective of reality if absolutely equal rights are given to different ethnic entities. Suppose that a tribe of 5,000 people demands to have its own university: if other language communities can develop their own language by organizing higher education in it, then the principle of equality demands that even the smallest communities have the right to do the same. Obviously, this is at present not workable (that future communication technology may make it possible is a matter for future consideration). To the extent possible, every language community should have primary education in its mother tongue, but for tribes of a size that is not viable in important respects of modern life, it is reasonable to expect them to join higher levels of education in a more sizable language.

Similarly, it is not unreasonable to make the degree of autonomy of a community proportionate to characteristics like quantity, literacy, economic viability, cultural distinctness. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is right to say that at least on paper, the Communist Empires had a reasonable solution. It counts for the Soviet Union and also for China: large ethnic minorities have their own Autonomous Republics, smaller ones have Autonomous Provinces, Autonomous Districts or Autonomous Prefectures. The degree of autonomy is

[91] A. Solzhenitsyn: *Rebuilding Russia* (Harvill, London 1991 (1990)), p.22.

obviously dependent on the powers exercised by the level of governance concerned, but at least there is one level where the community's distinctness is officially taken into account.

To a large extent, democratic India has already implemented these ideas, e.g. with its separate levels of Pradesh, Union Territory, autonomous Hill Councils for tribal areas like Gorkhaland and Bodoland. No revolution is needed to give the different communities in India a reasonable and appropriate degree of autonomy. Optimization and corrections in the present system are called for, but I need not go into those details here. Re-drawing of state boundaries may be part of the solution, but one should keep in mind both the interest of the local communities and the interest of the nation as a whole.

On the face of it, the creation of smaller states, coinciding with historical regions like Vidarbha, Bundelkhand, Mithila etc., instead of the unwieldy states which exists today, is certainly desirable.[92] However, one should remain alert for certain forces which have their own anti-national agenda. Thus, while under British rule the case for the separation of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency would have made sense in demographic and geographical terms, the specific circumstance of Islamic fanaticism meant that it would lead to minorization of and discrimination against the Hindus, and ultimately to full-fledged separatism; as it effectively did. Such circumstances may reappear.

Thus, in the case of Jharkhand, it is obvious to those who are not wilfully blind that the Christian Churches are so eager to get a separate state there because they intend to consolidate and extend their power over society in this area. The Church's designs on Jharkhand are not different from those on Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya. Even where geographical location does not make full political separation a realistic perspective, at least the Pradesh machinery will be used to strengthen the Church's grip and increase the social and cultural separation of the state's population from Hindu India as a whole.

Therefore, with all niceties about maximum autonomy for local communities, it should be kept in mind that the modern world is still a dangerous place, and that the Indian state as a whole needs a

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[92] A design for a division in 58 states coinciding with historical or somehow "natural" socio-cultural regions has been proposed by Prof. Rasheeduddin Khan, in: *Federal India. A Design for Change*, Vikas Publ., Delhi 1992.

realistic political organization with a strong centre. Unity in diversity is a fine thing if the commitment to unity is really there. Political unity in a non-authoritarian state needs a sense of loyalty in the whole population, which in turn requires a sense of belonging-together, a sense of cultural kinship. The fact that every single anti-India separatist movement brandishes the slogan: "We are not Hindus", carries its own message about what needs to be done if one wants to strengthen national unity.

In his essay *Rebuilding Russia*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn draws attention to the need of a cultural basis for national unity. On the one hand, this implies a willingness to let culturally foreign territories separate: Solzhenitsyn proposes to keep only the Slavic areas of the former Soviet Union together. On the other hand, it also means that culturally related populations should not exaggerate their differences and acknowledge their kinship. Thus, he invites the Ukrainians to remember that they were severed from the Russian nation (and partly from the Orthodox-Christian culture) by centuries of Polish Catholic occupation; and he calls on them not to put these occupiers in the right by insisting on re-separation from the Russians. That the Ukranians have not responded to this call, inspired by a far-sighted sense of history and of deeper cultural realities, is largely due to the wounds inflicted by the Soviet system, which had wilfully violated every dimension of social life and human sensibility, including the ethnic sentiments of the Ukranians and other peoples. But Solzhenitsyn is right: even in spite of the wrongs of history, we should look beyond petty ethnic particularism, to the next natural unit of belonging, as a coherent and sustainable building-block in an integrated planetary system.

The argument for separatism, brought up by the Ukranians as by many others, is the "right of self-determination of the nations". This argument is rightly invoked in cases where one nation has been violently subdued by another, e.g. Tibet by China. But the argument has its limits, starting with the definition of its central term: what is a "nation"?

In the late 18th century, Johann Gottfried Herder conceived of nations as God-given separate entities. This was the idealistic and theoretical counterpart of the raw state-nationalist policies of the French Revolution; it has played a role in Romantic nationalist movements, but its effect on modern concepts of nationhood and state is much smaller than the effective changes wrought by the

French Revolution (but because he was a German, he is easily blamed for such excesses of nationalism as the Nazi regime). Though his name is not that well-known anymore, Herder's ideas have implicitly found new popularity among the Aboriginals and other contemporary ethnic activists. Against Herder, it is my considered opinion that nations can be welded or split by historical developments, and that free human choices play a considerable role in this process.

The Romantic nationalist philologists of the 19th century claimed that "the language defines the nation". If we take language as the criterion of a nation, then there is not much left to decide: all the 4000 or so speech communities are separate nations entitled to "self-determination". But experience teaches that speech communities, or parts of them, can prefer to see themselves as components of larger politically viable units, as in the case of Switzerland. It is logical and practical to let language borders coincide with borders of administrative units (as they do in Switzerland), though it does not follow that all regions speaking a given language should be united in a single state or province (except for deciding specifically on language policy matters). But this importance of language as an instrument of administration does not imply that people's overriding loyalty should be towards their speech community.

Further, modern developments in communication and transport have made the "familiar" sector of reality bigger and the "foreign" sector smaller, which leads to a willingness to integrate with formerly foreign and distrusted neighbours, e.g. the voluntary integration of the European Community with its emerging sense of European nationhood. Whereas nationalism imposed one level of social integration as all-important, the fact is that human beings can consciously and proudly belong to a number of concentric circles: locality, region, speech community, a state, a supra-national community, and humanity as a whole. One of the intermediate levels will be defined as the "nation", but it is not forever determined which one, and it need not be the level of integration considered most important by individuals.

There is no good reason why someone should feel like being "a Bengali first", nor even to feel like being "an Indian first": each of these levels of integration has its own importance. The state (*rashtra*) level has a particular importance because it is the level at which sovereignty is exercised: both regional and international

political arrangements are subject to the assent of the state. Even so, there is no good reason why it should command our total loyalty, which it has been claiming the last two centuries.[93]

At the level of symbols, it is appropriate that state (or somehow state-related) functions start with the state anthem, but there is already much less reason to start school classes with it; a morning prayer which integrates the individual with a higher level of belonging than just this mortal political unit, might be more appropriate. Perhaps the most balanced formula is the Brahminical *Sankalp*, the preliminary formula before rituals in which the ritual and its practitioner are situated in space, in time and in the human race: this does justice to our spatio-temporal and social specificity but puts it all in the universal context.

So, nationhood is partly defined by accomplished facts like language, but is partly a matter of free choice, and therefore not defined unambiguously and for good. It is, moreover, just one of the levels of integration to which we feel attached and owe loyalty. Apart from these limitations of the concept of nationhood itself, there is a second problem with the principle of the "self-determination of nations": the question of self-determination. What is there to determine?

On the one hand, people are not very different, their needs and their possibilities are more or less the same. Thus, in the present world configuration, nations are not supposed to have anything to determine in matters of "human rights": the prevalent opinion is that these are universal rights, and that national sovereignty does not extend to choosing whether or not to accept them as a principle. On economic policy too, there seems to be an emerging worldwide consensus on the "socially corrected market economy". Apart from the right to develop your own language, which can be guaranteed under different political dispensations anyway, what difference in policy do you, Ukranians, expect from separating Ukraine from Russia rather than staying together?

On the other hand, being a separte state can make a big difference. In my country, there is a Flemish separatist movement (i.e. to

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[93] Nothing is totally new, and the idea that you should be willing to "die for your country" is really age-old (*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, "it is sweet and beatiful to die for the fatherland"). But the tribal, "organic" community was a more logical base for this loyalty, which was also commensurate with the pre-Enlightenment level of awareness. It is more extra-ordinary to claim people's total loyalty for the state *after* the ideas of humanism and universalism have been accepted.

split Belgium into two separate components of the European Community). One argument which to my knowledge it has never used, is the historical consideration that independence would have saved the Flemish from getting involved in World War 1. The real target of the German troops was Paris, and they had to move through Wallonia (the southern half of Belgium); if Flanders had not been united with Wallonia in a single state, the German troops would have had no reason to invade her. Without pronouncing an opinion on this particular historical question, I just want to point out that it illustrates what may be at stake for small communities or "nations" when they choose between being independent or being components of a larger political structure. Being in or being out may have life-or-death consequences. This is not always an argument for separation: if Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh had not been parts of India, they would have been swallowed by China, an unenviable fate considering what has happened to Tibet. Either way, "self-determination" is more than a matter of cultural policy: it may be a matter of survival.

That is why the decision of communities to stick together and form a sovereign political structure, if voluntary, can only be based on a sense of belonging together, of being part of a larger unity transcending (and yet closely related to) their separate identities.

In the case of India, the lesson is clear. The cultural unity which has developed over millennia, viz. Hinduism in the broad sense, is the logical unifier of the political entity India. If Hindu awareness is strong, people can easily see beyond their most immediate loyalties to region, sect or language community. Just as Hindu society has millennia of experience with certain forms of democracy, not identical with modern democracy but sufficiently close to ensure the effective success of the latter (in contrast with Islamic states where democracy has failed completely because it is so foreign to Islamic history), so also it has a solid culture of integration of smaller social and political units into larger ones, as a basis for modern federalism.

3.15. Conclusion

The tribal as well as the non-tribal populations of India have been settled in this country since before the dawn of literate civilization. A few tribes from abroad (Shakas, Hunas) have settled in India, in small numbers when compared with India's magnitude,

and they have dissolved themselves socially, culturally and genetically in the Indian population. The only exceptions are the Parsis and small sections of the Christian and Muslim communities, and even they have been in India for centuries. Unlike America and Australia, where a clear and politically relevant distinction can be made between recently arrived populations and Aboriginals, no such distinction can honestly be made in India.

Certain interested quarters, first of all the missionary apparatus, have been propagating the notion of Adivasi to separate the tribals from the Hindu society, to which all of them belong if we accept the historical, broad definition of Hinduism; and to which most of them even belong when we apply the narrow definitions thought up by scholars, because historical interaction has tended to draw even the most diverse communities in India closer together.

Every anti-India separatist movement is at once an anti-Hindu movement: though Indians themselves are still reluctant to acknowledge it, India is understood to be the chief political expression of Hindu society. Hinduism is the only thing which keeps India together, the only reason why people who are geographically so distant and linguistically and racially so different as, say, white Dardic-speaking Kashmiris and black Dravidian-speaking Malayalis, should live together under the roof of a single state. India can only have a stable and durable existence to the extent that the vast majority of its citizens continues to feel a certain affinity with and loyalty towards Sanatana Dharma.

FOUR

EQUALITY, "NAZIS" AND DALITS

4.1. Crank racism

A section of the ex-untouchable castes, or Scheduled Castes, has organized itself in the *Dalit* ("oppressed") movement, to further the common social and political interests of their segment of Hindu society. In itself, this self-organization should be a healthy and desirable development. Unfortunately, the Dalit current has attracted certain highly undesirable agitators.

With the active support of subversive forces including the missionary establishment, certain self-styled spokesmen of he Dalit cause are trying to give it a dubious intellectual footing. First of all, they are spreading the theory that the caste system is a kind of racial Apartheid, imposed by the Aryan invaders who wanted to maintain their racial purity. This analysis of Hindu society is subsequently used to buttress extremist political strategies.

The chief spokesman of this tendency, V.T. Rajshekar, writes: "The Dalit were the original inhabitants of India and resemble the African in physical features. It is said that India and Africa were one land mass until separated by the ocean. So both the Africans and the Indian Untouchables had common ancestors."[1]

For a first encounter with Rajshekar, this line is a good sample of the quality of his thought. The starting-point is that "Dalits are blacks". In fact, neither V.T. Rajshekar nor millions of ex-Untouchables in North India are black. From the postulated common skin colour, a common ancestry is derived for Black Africans and "Black Untouchables", disregarding the other physical features which have to be taken into account before postulating racial kinship (e.g. the Africans' hair texture is totally different from that of South Indian "blacks"). Moreover, a possibly reasonable ethnological statement on relations between India and Africa is at once marred by a reference to a totally unrelated phenomenon, the movement of the continents.

Of course different ethnic strands of humanity may be related, but that has nothing to do with the geological *Continental Drift* (breaking up the mega-continent of Gondwanaland into Antarctica,

[1] V.T. Rajshekar: ***Dalit — the Black Untouchables of India***, p.43.

South America, Australia, Africa and India), which took place millions of years before the genesis of humanity.[2] If India's "blacks" are really of the same stock as Africans, it would be more plausible to assume that they have immigrated, but then they would not be "aboriginal" anymore. So, Rajshekar twists geological chronology some millions of years to fit his political compulsions. Short, we are faced with a crackpot.

Rajshekar continues: "Some portion of these came to found the Indus Valley Civilization. These original inhabitants put up a strong fight against the Aryan invaders. However, the latter, working through deceitful means, defeated the innocent but hard-working original inhabitants who had built the world's most ancient civilization in the Indus Valley. The original inhabitants who fought and were enslaved were kept outside village limits. They became Untouchables (Scheduled Castes). Those who fled to the forests and hills became tribals (Scheduled Tribes)."

The bottom line of this racial explanation of caste and untouchability, is that the ex-untouchable castes are not Hindus, because Hinduism is the religion of the "Aryan race". That is why many Christian missionaries support the racialist version of Indian history: to declare the Harijans non-Hindus and increase the legitimacy of treating them as an open hunting-ground for conversions to Christianity. Thus, the India-born missionary Sunder Raj writes, in protest against the fact that the Constitution does not treat the Harijans as a separate minority: "The untouchables of India, who are non-Aryan by race and non-Brahminical by religion, against their own declared standing, were written in August 1947 in the statute book as 'Hindus' against all facts and truth."[3]

In this statement, non-Brahminical and non-Hindu are wrongly passed off as synonyms: though in many cases employing their own priests, the religion and traditions to which Harijans subscribed were quite Hindu, and the social criterion of participation in the caste system obviously applied to them. Dr. Ambedkar, the undisputed leader of the Untouchables, did not consider them a non-Hindu minority, but thought on the contrary that only an

[2] The theory of the drift of the continents was launched by the German scholar Alfred Wegener, in his *Die Entstehung der Kontinente und Ozeane* ("The Genesis of Continents and Oceans") of 1915. It took until the 1960s before it was generally accepted.

[3] Sunder Raj: *The Confusion Called Conversion*, p.78.

explicit act of conversion could take them out of the Hindu fold. Even then, he opted for conversion to a religion within the Hindu orbit, Buddhism, and rejected in strong terms the greedy appeals of Christian and Islamic missionaries.

In the Constituent Assembly, in the debate on whether to recognize the propagation of a religion as a "fundamental right", and on whether to include a clause against conversion by force or fraud (a discussion initiated by K.M. Munshi), Mr. R.P. Thakur (a Dalit, in spite of his name) clarified the position of his community on conversions to Christianity: "Sir, I am a member of the Depressed Classes. This clause of the Fundamental Rights is very important from the standpoint of my community. You know well, Sir, that the victims of these religious conversions are ordinarily from the Depressed Classes. The preachers of other religions approach these classes of people, take advantage of their ignorance, extend all sorts of temptations and ultimately convert them. I want to know from Mr. Munshi whether 'fraud' covers all these things. If it does not cover them, I should ask Mr. Munshi to re-draft this clause so that fraud of this nature might not be practised on these Depressed Classes. I should certainly call these 'fraud'."[4] That was the Dalits' "own declared standing" which Sunder Raj falsely invokes.

V.T. Rajshekar consistently refers to Hindus as "Hindu Nazis" or just "Nazis". Perhaps he is unaware of the profound similarity between Hitler's crank racism and his own. Hitler misconstrued the Jews as a separate race, when in fact they were a separate religious community without racial homogeneity; racism is bad enough, but Hitler capped it with the mistaken view that Jews were a race in the first place. Rajshekar himself makes the same mistake of classifying upper castes and lower castes as different races. He adopts Hitler's rhetoric of taking up arms against the "foreign race" which has come to rob power and wealth from the "sons of the soil". His tirades against the Brahmins are word for word similar to the Nazi tirades against the Jews. Even stylistically, the two have much in common: the repetitive and obsessive ranting of the half-educated crackpot. And what is more serious: like Hitler, Rajshekar seeks to find justice for his sons of the soil through violence.

The war between the "invading Aryans", who were "barbarians without a civilization", and the native population has continued

[4] *Constituent Assembly Debates*, vol.3, p.490-491; reproduced in Sitaram Goel: *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters*, p.249-250.

from the fall of Harappa till today. To make the point more convincing, Rajshekar cites the diagnosis of his Black American comrade Runoko Rashidi: "The Aryans enforced the caste system on the Black population (the original inhabitants of India) 'with a cold-blooded racist logic with whites on top, mixed races in the middle and the mass of the conquered Blacks at the bottom'."[5] Groaning under this racial oppression, they are "an explosive commodity. They would burn the whole land, once ignited."[6]

Rajshekar wants to intensify that struggle: "The Untouchables and tribals will assure that the Indian Revolution of their dreams will surpass even the Chinese Revolution. We long for Revolution, we yearn for Revolution, we pine for Revolution. And we are prepared to die for Revolution. Let hundreds of Untouchables die so that India may live in peace. This country is ours. Therefore we love India more than the Aryan invaders. We want to liberate India from the tyranny of foreigners and this most gory form of Apartheid."[7] Elsewhere, he has put it more concisely: "A bloody revolution is in the offing. Don't miss this historic opportunity."[8]

It is an open question to what extent ideas like Rajshekar's are acclaimed by wider sections of the Dalit movement. Thanks to the widespread belief in the Aryan Invasion theory, his crank racism has a measure of credibility with many people. His concomitant demand for a violent overthrow of the hegemony of the foreign race is probably harder to sell.

In my talks with militants and leaders of the Dalit movement, I have found most of them to be good-natured people, much more sympathetic than the upper-caste Communists. The Dalit activists whom I have interviewed or personally known were on the whole very constructive people, engaged in all kinds of social and educational work. Conversation with the straightforward Dalit leader Kanshi Ram, founder of the *Bahujan Samaj Party*, is refreshing after hearing the dithering doublespeak of more mainstream politicians.

There is also a range of factions within the movement: Rajshekar criticizing Kanshi Ram (rejected by Muslim communalists because he welcomes the Muslim underclasses if they identify as

[5] *ibid.*, p.44.
[6] *ibid.*, p.82.
[7] *ibid.*, p.82.
[8] V.T. Rajshekar: *Aggression on Indian Culture*, p.20.

"Dalits" rather than as Muslims), the splits in the BSP, the neo-Buddhist genuine Ambedkarites frowning on Rajshekar's pseudo-Ambedkarite anti-national positions, internal dissensions among the Ambedkarites, and Ambedkarites versus Maoists. So, at first sight, there is little chance that extremist currents like Rajshekar's can carry the mass of the Dalits with them. But history teaches that a "criticism from the left", a constantly exerted pressure by the most extreme faction within a movement, often forces the entire movement to adopt the extreme position. We know how the extreme Khalistani factions have forced most Sikh politicians to take a pro-Khalistani stand or something close to that.

On the occasion of the Panjab elections in early 1992, BSP leader Kanshi Ram has gone on record saying that "perhaps we too should take to militancy, to combat state terrorism". The term "militancy" is the accepted secularist designation of secessionist terrorism. It is widely believed that Kanshi Ram had an understanding with some "militant" groups not to disturb his election campaign. Nonetheless, one of the terrorist groups may not have been a party to the agreement, or may simply have made a mistake, and killed some BSP acivists. Kanshi Ram spared his allies the blame and layed it at the door of "state terrorism". His threat to take to "militancy" may be just rhetoric, but ultimately it may not remain without effect; especially considering the common phenomenon that an ambitious newcomer in a political party may stand up and profile himself by promising to be tougher than the incumbent leader, and to implement what the older leader only talks about.

The biggest risk of the violent posture of fringe movements is that they push mainstream movements to take a similar stand. The Backward Caste rally in Patna on 8 October 1990 for the implementation of the Mandal Report's recommendations (extending positive discrimination meant for Scheduled Castes and Tribes to the so-called Backward Castes), with two lakh people, demonstrated to what extent the Janata Dal politicians are condoning violent solutions. Subodh Kant Sahay, Home Minister, declared: "Whoever opposes our *chakra* of social justice will be crushed and wiped out." Ajit Singh: "You should prepare to even die for the Mandal recommendations." Ram Vilas Paswan: "The servile era of Jagjivan Ram has gone, the militant era of Ram Vilas Paswan is at hand." The crowd shouted: *"Brahmin saala desh chhodo"* (Brahmins,

leave the country).[9]

Such rhetoric is not without consequences. *India Today* reported: "Bihar is seeing the beginnings of a caste war. Backward castes have already begun attacking and smashing buses belonging to 'forwards' and ordering them off the roads. The battle lines are already being drawn between the Yadavs on the one side and the Bhumihar-Rajput combine on the other. Even as V.P. Singh was addressing the rally in Patna, an independent MLA — a Yadav leader — and his supporters opened fire at seven places on anti-reservationists, killing a constable and a Bhumihar youth." After that, hostilities have escalated for some time, several Communist guerrilla groups intensified their campaign of murder, and caste militias keep on flourishing.

V.T. Rajshekar often applauds incidences of "caste war", and he would like to see all of India follow the example of Bihar. For instance: "A happy news has come from Mysore district. Untouchables of a village, Sargur, persecuted for years by the Lingayats (Hindus), have very ably and effectively organized self-defence under the inspiration of Babasaheb [Ambedkar]. They launched their self-defence in which some Hindus were killed though the Untouchables also had to pay some price in saving their honour. In all, ėight people were killed in the on-going Hindu-Dalit caste war... On November 11, about 200 armed Dalits of Sargur village pulled out Hindus from a State Road Transport Corporation bus they were travelling in, attacked them with reapers and sickles, smashed some with boulders and pushed them into a nearby canal..."[10]

To this, outsiders will surely say that Hindu society can only solve this threat of revolutionary violence by attacking its "root cause", viz. social injustice. And it is true: Hindus are much too slack in social reform, much too complacent and oblivious of the national interest, to create a society that will not nurture the likes of V.T. Rajshekar or the Naxalites. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to believe that revolutionary violence is proportionate to the degree of social injustice and poverty suffered by the underclass.

[9] *India Today*, 31/10/1990. The term *saala*, "brother-in-law", connotes: "I slept with your sister". Under Muslim rule, forcing Hindus to give their sisters and daughters in marriage or concubinage was a common form of humiliation of the Kafirs, so that terms of family relation have acquired a connotation of contempt.

[10] *Dalit Voice*, 1/12/1991.

It is never the poor who make revolution, but the not-so-poor, the ambitious ex-poor, inspired by not-so-poor intellectuals. Alauddin Khilji kept the Hindu masses in extreme poverty, with the explicit calculation that they would then be too busy with sheer survival to think of revolt. The Khalistani movement emanated from one of India's most prosperous communities. Muslim agitation is partly due to the habit of enjoying privileges, first as rulers, later as one of the "spoiled children of the British Empire". Similarly, the Tamil separatisms first in India, later in Sri Lanka, cannot be understood without reference to their privileged position in the colonial set-up.

Justice, prosperity and dignity for Dalits are worthwhile as goals in themselves, but not as means to destroy the social basis of Naxalites and other armed rebels. Revolt is more a matter of mentality than of actual suffering and poverty. V.T. Rajshekar's crank racism too is not an ideology of the poor and the backward: it is the product of a subversive mentality popular among certain sections of the intellectual class.

4.2. Dalits and Gandhi

A factor which boosts the extremists' chances is the relative absence of rival political movements claiming the attention and the confidence of the Dalits. In this respect, the most striking phenomenon is the absence of the traditional Gandhians: they seem to be passive bystanders to the process of Dalit/Harijan estrangement from the ideals of the Mahatma. On 14 March 1991, BSP activists put out the eternal flame on Mahatma Gandhi's *samadhi* on Rajghat in Delhi, as a show of contempt for the patronizing "Harijan" policies and the integrative perspective of the Mahatma.

Dalit Voice is strengthening the disillusionment with Gandhian politics by publishing compromising statements allegedly made by Mahatma Gandhi. It has dug up some quotations which suggest that the Mahatma held anti-Black racist opinions, and which were used by American Black activists to prevent a street in Atlanta (Georgia, USA) from being renamed as *Gandhi Place* — a big success for *Dalit Voice* in its attempt to internationalize its campaign.

Thus, Gandhi seems to have said, on 26 September 1896 in South Africa: "Ours is one continued struggle sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir (African — DV) whose occupation is hunting and

whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife and then pass life in indolence and nakedness." From his paper *Indian Opinion*, 18 March 1905, is quoted: "Clause 200 makes provision for registration of persons belonging to uncivilized races (meaning Africans — DV)... One can understand the necessity of registration of Africans who will not work, but why should registration be required for indentured Indians?" From the same paper, 4 September 1904: "About the mixing of Kaffirs (Africans — DV) with the Indians I must confess I feel most strongly. I think it is very unfair to the Indian population, and it is an undue tax on even the proverbial patience of my countrymen."[11]

In reply, one could point out that even many of the people who worked for the emancipation of the Black slaves did not think of Blacks as being already fully equal with "more civilized races", not from a biological necessity but because they simply had yet to catch up with international progress in science and culture. At that time, most democratic countries still had a census election system, considering that (white) labourers and other less prominent people were not fully qualified for participation in politics. This belief in inequality was not motivated by racism, i.e. by a belief in inequality as a biological fact, but by a consideration of factual differences in economical and educational standards. One could say that Gandhi was a son of his time. Still, someone venerated as a Mahatma could be expected to be ahead of his time and to avoid even those faults which were common and understandable but faults nonetheless.

The real reason why the Dalit movement rejects Gandhi has little to do with his activities in South Africa. Gandhi was an outspoken defender of Hinduism and of Hindu unity, and opposed attempts to separate the Harijans from the Hindu fold. When Dr. Ambedkar had negotiated (or rather, had accepted a British offer for) a separate political representation for the Depressed Classes, Gandhi went on a fast unto death and forced Ambedkar into abandoning the plans for separate representation. Instead, the two leaders signed the Poona Pact, which assured the Harijans of reserved representation within the Hindu section of the political bodies.

After this event, Dr. Ambedkar remained extremely critical of the Mahatma, at a time when he had become an unquestionable

[11] Quoted in *Dalit Voice*, 16/10/1992.

authority and saint for Congress followers, most ordinary Hindus and a large section of Western public opinion, esp. in the USA. He not only condemned Gandhi's refusal of giving the Depressed Classes solid structural safeguards rather than a "change of heart" on the part of the upper castes, but also rejected Gandhi's image of being a great activist on behalf of the Depressed Classes even along idealistic lines.

In his book *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, he goes through Gandhi's biography and finds very little that had anything to do with the cause of the Untouchables. He ridicules Gandhi's declaration that "scavenging is noble work" and that therefore no inferiority or stigma should be attached to the Bhangi caste: Gandhi was always merely reinterpreting and glorifying the existing situation instead of using his critical faculty and working for real change (cfr. his stand about Islam: "Islam is a noble faith"). True, Gandhi had his volunteer followers do some *bhangi* work, but his stand that this work was noble work would only have acquired credibility if non-bhangis had opted for it as a profession; apart from the fact that realistically, the word "noble" is degraded by applying it to excrement-carrying. While the Communists and the Indian Muslims who had been very hateful towards Gandhi when he was alive, started brandishing Gandhi's name after his death to blackmail Hindus, the Ambedkarite movement retained the sharply anti-Gandhi stand till today.

V.T. Rajshekar also objects to Gandhiji's term *Harijan* (which I have used in this book along with *Dalit*, *Depressed Classes* and *Scheduled Castes*, depending on the context and without attaching an added meaning). He claims that the term is used for children of temple prostitutes. It is true that in Pagan cultures, the children of temple prostitutes are often considered to be children of the deity, e.g. Romulus (founder of Rome) and Remus were children of the war god Mars and were brought up by a female wolf, i.e. a woman serving the god Mars whose symbolic animal was the wolf. But then, if this usage existed for the god Hari (Vishnu) in India, it would be strange that this was not noticed earlier.

I have asked the professional Gandhians at the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Foundation what they were doing to counter the increasing rejection of the Mahatma by the ex-Harijans. But they had nothing to offer in reply. They were busy going to an International Symposium on Poverty in a 5-star hotel

4.3. Church support for *Dalit Voice*

V.T. Rajshekar advocates violent revolution of the "oppressed race" of Dalits, Adivasis, Backward Castes and Minorities against the "master race" of "Hindu Nazis". He also advocates conversion to a "religion with teeth", not Ambedkar's Buddhism, nor Christianity which has compromised too much with Hinduism recently, but Islam. During the first Gulf war, he called on Iran to make peace with Iraq and send its million-strong armed forces to India to liberate the Dalits and Muslims from Hindu rule.

Given this political profile, it is somewhat strange that V.T. Rajshekar should get so much support from a community that nowadays presents itself as constructive and peace-loving: the Christians. Since at least 1986, I have seen different Christian papers presenting V.T. Rajshekar as an authority on Dalit matters, praising him and adopting his ideas and some of his rhetoric. I will give some examples from the Flemish Catholic mission monthly *Wereldwijd*.

First, the general line of this missionary paper's India reporting may be noted. Sometimes some token poetry about Hindu philosophy is offered, but coupled with the standard anti-Hindu propaganda which the European public does not even recognize as such. Thus, one article by Marc Colpaert profusely cites the Marxist professor Romila Thapar (presumably in good faith, because contemporary Christians no longer have the alertness to distinguish a neutral observer from a declared enemy), with a seemingly informative introduction to the difference between *Shramanas* and *Brahmanas*. It sells the voguish lie that the difference between the two lay in acceptance vs. non-acceptance of caste: all of history is nowadays being rewritten as one long struggle for social equality. Then comes the big lie: "In an often horrible way, religious forms of expression like Buddhism and Jainism have been persecuted and even exterminated."[12] It is true that Buddhism has been persecuted and exterminated in India and Central Asia, but that was by Islam.

Incidentally, the opinion page of the same issue contains a letter protesting against the paper's wilful silence about the persecution of Christians in Muslim countries, notably Turkey, where only 3,000 Aramaic Christians are left, down from 40,000 within recent

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[12] *Wereldwijd*, March 1986. For a detailed refutation of this big lie, see my *Negationism in India* (Voice of India 1992), ch.2.7.

memory. The paper regularly publishes eulogies of Islam, that "religion of peace", apparently because there is no hope of converting any Muslim anyway. Like all ambitious opportunists, our missionaries flatter the strong and attack the weak.

Under its new editor, the paper has published a few polite criticisms of Islamic anti-Christian persecutions in Sudan and discriminations in Pakistan. But this never becomes a criticism of Islam as such; the paper systematically claims that Islam is an intrinsically good religion which is being misunderstood and misused. Considering that the Pope has been the only consistent supporter of the persecuted Lebanese and Sudanese Christians, one would expect more alertness regarding Islamic fanaticism in the Catholic media, but they are too concerned with their "multi-culturalist" agenda to report frankly on the problem Islam poses.

The March 1993 issue contains a report on the Bombay riots, in which the Muslim initiative is concealed and the Hindu participants are demonized to the core: the standard version of the facts as given in the Indian secularist press. Yet, the source of this story which is really very ordinary, is concealed: it is said to be an Indian woman who cannot reveal her name "for fear of reprisals". Obviously, she is a missionary and the chief source of informations, apart from the well-known Islamic apologists like A.A. Engineer. Now, to give an anti-Hindu story which other Indian women, say Anita Pratap in *Time Magazine*, sell as a matter of routine, is not a very risky thing to do, even in the city of the Shiv Sena. This whole act of smuggling a story out of India of which the source has to be concealed, gives the false impression that India is a repressive country where free speech is endangered. Moreover, the Shiv Sena would not know what anyone says to a Dutch-language paper in a distant continent. So, if the source has to be concealed, the reason is different: it is obviously a missionary, male or female, who should rightly fear for his/her visa if, the Indian authorities find that he/she is dabbling in politics. In fact, I think I know the identity of the source; I am not going to tell the Shiv Sena, but I must say I am disappointed to find yet another missionary, whose selfless dedication to social causes is not in doubt, stooping so low as to use the moral authority which the missionary office still commands among Christians to add to the vilification campaign against the Hindus.

This is how the paper sums up some of the information gathered in the Romila Thapar interview: "Firstly it is not true that 'Hinduism' has always acted in a non-violent way; and secondly the Brahmins were not persecuted by Islam in as 'horrible' a way as

contended."[13] Here we have the central teaching of ***negationism***: the denial of large-scale and ideologically motivated crimes against humanity, notably the massive murder and enslavement of Hindus by Islamic invaders and rulers from the 7th till the 19th century. This negationism is equally reprehensible as the denial of the Nazi holocaust of the Jews, yet it is practised without scruples by Indian "secularists" and Christian "liberation theologians" alike.

"The trauma for the Brahmins was that, in the time of the Moghuls, they were counted among 'the rest', i.e. the non-Muslims." Being among the big mass of non-Muslims was indeed bad enough: killings, abductions, slavery, tax and other discriminations, desecration and destruction of temples, etc. Though there has been occasional collaboration with the occupying forces of Islam, on the whole the Indian people, and the lower castes more than the higher, fought Islam tooth and nail. However, the Brahmins were not just part of the rest: they were often singled out for specially harsh treatment, as they were the "leaders of infidelity", the backbone of Pagan society. The anti-Brahmin campaign, organized by the missionaries since the 16th century (and adopted by some "natives", like Jotirao Phule, Ramaswamy Naicker, V.T. Rajshekar), and of which the article under consideration is an integral part, is in a sense the continuation of these Muslim persecutions.

"Bad for them was also that Islam was more able to have a dialogue with the inheritors of Shramanism": this ludicrous statement is not worth any comment except for a brief restatement of the facts. Buddhism ("Shramanism") has been exterminated by Islam from Iran to Ningxia (China), and from Kazakhstan to East Bengal and Malaysia. There has never been a dialogue between Islam and "Shramanism", and even today there is not even the pretence of such a dialogue. On the contrary, the Buddhists of Myanmar have firmly put down Islamic arrogance, and their army has crushed Islamic attempts to create another Kashmir in Myanmar's western corner, as the Thais have done in their southernmost region. The Ladakhi Buddhists are firmly opposing the attempts to islamize their region.

Moreover, the Muslims never noticed a doctrinal distinction

[13] The word "Hinduism" is between quote-marks in conformity with Romila Thapar's directive that "Hinduism" does not exist, that it is concocted by the fundamentalist movement which she calls "Syndicated Moksha".

between Brahmanas and Shramanas. They described the Buddhist monks as "shaven-headed Brahmins" (as opposed to the Brahmins *stricto sensu*, who at least retained a tuft of hair). While they mentioned Parsi, Jewish and Christian Indians as such, they never mentioned Jains and Buddhists except as components of the category of "Hindus" or "Kafirs". Only Albiruni notices the opposition between Brahmins and Buddhists, but adds that they have much more in common: both of them despise the Muslims.

According to *Wereldwijd*, the Brahmins also "felt bad" when the Christian missionaries came, because unlike these, they had "no good schools, no monasteries, no hospitals". Of course there were hospitals, but the British prohibition of traditional medicine (Ayurveda) hit them hard. Hindu monasteries were available in plenty, unlike in Protestantism, and with a variety of formulas unknown to the rigid Catholic Church. As for schools, in the 1830s, British surveys in Madras, in Bengal and in Bombay (as also in Burma) showed that the education was more widespread, more democratic, and of better quality, than the contemporary system in England.[14] The mission lobby did what it could to destroy the indigenous education and to replace it with its own.

That much to give an idea of our Liberation theologians' total enlistment in the disinformation effort which is known in India as "secularism". The article goes on to present V.T. Rajshekar, with a good starting quote: "I was a Hindu". He admits he belonged to the highest among the Shudra castes, not quite untouchable (his "We Dalits" line is false rhetoric). Of course: the proletarian revolution was never led by proletarians, and the Dalit revolution is not led by Dalits.

But since 15 years (this was in 1986), he is no longer a Hindu: "My studies, my experiences and my involvement in the Dalit movement have made me wiser. I am a human being. A Hindu cannot be human." It is quite correct that it is in the first place his "studies" that have made him the Hindu-baiter he is. Many people have worked among Dalits, or are Dalits, and still remain sympathetic towards Hinduism (e.g. Mahatma Gandhi): it all depends on what ideas you have acquired to organize your "experiences" with. Experiences do not generate a world-view by themselves, but are

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[14] About the successful indigenous system of education as found and described by the British, see Dharampal: *The Beautiful Tree* (Biblia Impex, Delhi); and Joseph Dibona: *One Teacher One School* (Biblia Impex, Delhi 1983).

immediately subjected to an interpretative framework, the result of ideological "studies". His studies are centred on the Aryan Invasion theory, the alpha and omega of his world view. *Wereldwijd* does not put any question-mark when it adopts Rajshekar's explanation that "Hinduism is really Brahminism, imported by the Aryans".

Next, Rajshekar is welcome to say something which is very important in the general missionary campaign (in its modern, equality-championing phase) against Hinduism: to affirm the absolute identification of Hinduism with caste. "Remove the caste system and Hinduism will collapse like a card house... Caste and untouchability cannot die, for they are part of a divine sanction... Hinduism is therefore a big madhouse, the biggest madhouse in the world."

The article continues: "It angers Indians like Rajshekar that hardly 5% of the Hindu population (Brahmins) controls everything like gods on earth; that they make up India's ruling class." Now, our Liberation theologians get down to business: all you justice-loving readers, transform your indignation into the firm resolve to destroy this ugly Brahmin class that deprives the other 95% of its rightful share in wealth and power.

What the innocent readers may not immediately notice, is that this statement strongly resembles the anti-Semitic propaganda which earlier generations of Christian and post-Christian activists used to spread: "Behind everything stands the Jew." The Nazi indignation at the prominence of Jews could, without a trace of distortion, have been formulated thus: "It angers Germans like Hitler that a small percentage of the German population (Jews) controls everything like gods on earth; that they effectively make up Germany's ruling class." We will deal with the allegation of Brahmin omnipotence in sub-chapters 4.7 to 4.10.

The article, Rajshekar-inspired but in its own words, continues: "It angers them that Brahminism tries to absorb all 'dissidents' in order to render them harmless: Buddhism, Jainism, Veerashaivism. In their attempt to incorporate Sikhism, the Brahmins have so far failed." So, there are many religions in India, and some have been foolish enough to be swallowed by Brahminism; fortunately, the Sikhs are holding out. In endorsing V.T. Rajshekar's sympathy for Sikh separatism, our liberation theologians should have had the honesty to tell their readers that Rajshekar has made a name for himself by being arrested for his specific support to Jarnail Singh

Bhindranwale, a merciless terrorist.

The broader allegation that Brahminism has rendered the "dissident" movements harmless by incorporating them, is so sweeping that we would like to see it specified: what exactly has Brahminism done wrong? If the caste system is meant, and if caste is wrong, and the Veerashaivas evolved from a caste-free movement into a superior caste, who else but they themselves are to blame? If Christians preach against caste but practise it within their churches, it is their own free decision to be "absorbed" into at least this social aspect of "Brahminism". But of course, much more is meant than caste: for the missionaries, caste is only a lever to destroy doctrines and practices that have nothing to do with caste, such as idol worship, yoga, belief in reincarnation, etc., and replace these with Christian beliefs and practices.

A more serious inquiry into the separate status of Jainism and Buddhism would reveal that doctrinally, they never were very different from "Hinduism", and that socially, they never ceased being a part of Hindu society. But this, the mission lobby will deny tooth and nail, now that "divide and rule" has become an essential part of their ideological offensive against the Asian religions which they have so far not been able to overrun (the way they have done with African and American religions). Any friction between different sects is played up to create the semblance of a doctrinal opposition and an age-old conflict like that between Christianity and Islam.

For instance, Mark Heirman, who belongs to the same Christian "development co-operation" circles, has published a brochure about the civil war in Sri Lanka, titled: *Hindoe-boeddhistisch geweld in Sri Lanka* (Dutch: "Hindu-Buddhist Violence in Sri Lanka"). It doesn't mention a single fact in which a religious opposition between Hindu and Buddhist is the cause for violence; in fact it shows quite clearly that this conflict has been entirely caused by secular factors such as the colonial heritage (use of the Tamils as a privileged enclave by the British) and the language policy ("Sinhalese only" Act etc.). At most, there have been a few instances where fanatical Buddhist priests (I regret to hear from eye-witnesses that these do exist) made deals with the secularist Tamil Tigers to destroy Hindu temples, long after the hostilities had broken out. Yet, the title conveys the message that Hindus and Buddhists, if made to live together, will only create another Lebanon.

By contrast, his brochure on Sudan, where the civil war's prime

mover is Islam's determination to subdue and islamize the non-Muslim southern tribes, is an exercise in drowning this glaring religious motive in a soup of "ethnic" and "poverty" and "foreign intervention" factors. Certain Mission think-tanks have decided to spread just the same distortion as you find in Indian secularist sources (and a lot of their more innocent infantrymen have already interiorized this new line): downplay the Islamic problem, and portray other religions as all equally prone to fanaticism.[15]

When projecting rival religions as fanatical, the *Wereldwijd* correspondent adds not only to the intensity but also to the size of this fanatical threat: "Critical-minded Indians no longer take it, that Brahminism makes Christians, Muslims and Sikhs nervous by building up an arrogant fundamentalism with the support of the government. For the Fascist movement RSS plays into the hand of the government." The intended Hindu fundamentalists will be glad to learn that they are supported by the government (at that time, Rajiv's Congress): so far their experience has been that the political establishment including the government opposes them by all means fair and foul, and that it privileges the minorities in proportion to their capacity of creating riots and getting international money and media support. One gets used to the flood of lies about the "Hindu fundamentalists", but to say that they are supported by the government, is a lie which the missionaries can sell only to their totally ignorant home front.

Where you see conflict between different Brahmin factions, there is in fact a tacit agreement at work, like in all good conspiracies: "The orthodox among the Brahmins control the RSS and the 'progressives' among them are heading the national parties, including the Communists. The intention is that there will always be Brahmins at the helm, no matter who wins or loses." Let us explicitate a bit what our missionary paper is saying here.

These *ugly Brahmins* are sly fellows: even after they drop their caste marks and convert to Communism, they remain Brahmins whose first loyalty is to Brahminism. Doesn't that sound familiar? It is just like those *dirty Jews*: even after Karl Marx became an athe-

[15] These brochures have been published in a series by IPIS, Antwerp 1989-91. The brochure on Tibet swallows a number of the People's Republic's premisses, including a map which confines Tibet to half its territory (*Xizang Zizhiqu*). For a publication of "liberation theology" signature, it shows remarkably little identification with the oppressed, and a great deal of understanding for the oppressor's viewpoint.

ist and a dialectical materialist, his Jewish genes conditioned him to remain a faithful servant of the Jewish conspiracy to take over the world. His slogan: "Religion is the opium of the people", while seemingly also an attack on Judaism, was merely a ploy to destroy Christianity and thus to strengthen the Jewish power position. Brahmins are the Jews of India (as V.T. Rajshekar has often said), and they should be treated alike.

Next, the article acknowledges a fact which missionary literature for the home front usually denies: that the Brahmins are not a rich caste, that there are many poor Brahmins. Usually, we hear of "the rich Brahmins oppressing the poor low-castes", if only because materialistic Westerners hardly understand any other dimension than that of material wealth and its opposite. This time, V.T. Rajshekar has the merit of conveying a slightly more complex picture (though a few paragraphs down, the article will resume the more familiar tune). In the words of *Wereldwijd*: "Castes and classes cross each other. Both among the rich and among the poor, the first loyalty is towards their caste. It is therefore difficult to organize the poor of a caste against the rich of the same caste. The poor man can be a Brahmin, the rich man can be a Shudra." And then Rajshekar: "A class struggle without previous annihilation of caste is excluded."

Possibly, but is it the business of Catholic theologians to promote class struggle? The social teachings of the Church explicitly reject the concept of class struggle, and rightfully so. Whatever our criticisms of the Church, as a religious organization it has at least kept in mind that religion transcends inter-human differences, such as those between black and white, healthy and sick, employer and employee, rich and poor, etc. Religion can never be the champion of particular class interests, if it is to remain faithful to itself. In Catholic school, we were taught that "the line between good and evil runs not between classes or nations, but right through every human being". As for practical politics, the social harmony model of the Christian-Democratic parties in Europe has brought the lower classes bigger gains in wealth, opportunity and dignity than the class struggle of the Socialists. Why export to India a model that has failed elsewhere? Perhaps it is because anything that might hurt Hinduism is apriori welcomed.

We sense that the punch-line is approaching, when the topic of conversion is brought up. Rajshekar says: "Gandhi only wanted a

patch-work solution. But Ambedkar wanted a revolution for the untouchables and asked them to convert *en masse* to Buddhism." The paper, which is following the gradual shift in the missionary propaganda from enlisting Gandhi as a kind of crypto-Christian to attacking him as an incurable Hindu, adds: "In the Gandhi film, this [conversion] was not shown." David Attenborough's film *Gandhi* was indeed a disgusting exercise in extolling Mountbatten and Nehru, and its ignoring Ambedkar was indeed a serious flaw, but we should not hold it against a Gandhi biography that it fails to mention an event which took place 8 years after Gandhi's death (Ambedkar and his followers converted in 1956). At any rate, the remark is only made to suggest that these ugly Brahmins even control the foreign film production, and that this Rajshekar and his missionary supporters are really underdogs whose voice is suppressed. In spite of their massive organizational and media power, and of their huge financial resources, modern missionaries revel in the role of underdogs (feels like Jesus).

Finally, our mission paper is coming to the point: "The lowest on India's social ladder (one third of the population) has, according to many, no other option but to convert, as even Marxism is incapable of abolishing caste. Thousands of 'untouchables' and aboriginals have therefore converted to Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism... For the poorest, flight from Hinduism seems to be the only chance to better their status." And Rajshekar adds: "A man wants self-respect. And Hinduism cannot give him that." The paper wholeheartedly agrees: "Conversion is for them the only way which liberates from the grip of humiliation." But it does not therefore advocate Ambedkar's initiative of embracing Buddhism: "Conversion to Buddhism is not that meaningful for most, because the Buddha himself had been absorbed into the Brahminical system." Yeah, if at all you're going to choose a new religion, why settle for Buddhist Paganism, why not choose the best?

The article concludes: "'Hinduism is Brahminism. Brahminism is caste system. The caste system organizes the country socially and politically. A convert steps out of this system. Conversion in India is therefore a political act.' Thus argues V.T. Rajshekar, editor of *Dalit Voice*. The facts seem to put him in the right."

This article blackening Hinduism is followed by a more positive article highlighting Bede Griffiths' attempts at "inculturation" and Hindu-Christian dialogue. This creates a semblance of even-

handedness. In fact, this inculturative "theology of fulfilment" with its "hidden Christ in Hinduism" terminology is in effect the second wing of the same broad strategy. For the "secular" mainstream Hindus, there is the Theology of Fulfilment, and for the backward castes and tribes, there is Liberation Theology. I am not saying that this two-pronged strategy was a conscious ploy, in fact both liberation theology and inculturation theology have initially been frowned upon by orthodox Church dignitaries, but now that both have emerged, they are being co-ordinated theologically and organizationally.

A more recent issue of the same monthly is slightly more daring, perhaps because the Dalit movement has gained momentum, especially in terms of international support.[16] The article which we have just considered, only quotes fairly reasonable statements of Rajshekar, carefully shielding him from the outrage which the publication of his crass rhetoric and crank racist statements would cause among the European readers. This policy is not abandoned, because after all, the Church has decided to build him up, and it knows how to do these things. Yet, some of the statements quoted with approval in the more recent article go beyond the familiar "social justice" plank and the ordinary anti-Brahmin allegations.

The title is a quotation of a Catholic priest, Dr. Kananaikil, who agrees with Rajshekar: "Of course, they are Nazis". People are used to hear Communists hurl abuses at everyone they don't like, with "Nazi" being a favourite. But the mild kind of people who form the missions' support base in Europe are not expecting such abuses in their mission paper. So, an explanation follows: "For dr. Kananaikil, working at the Indian Social Institute in Delhi, 'class struggle' is no longer a dirty word."

The priest is interviewed: "I read in *Dalit Voice*, a paper by and for the outcastes, that they plainly call the Hindu parties BJP and VHP 'Nazis'. The newspaper *Indian Express* they call 'a Nazi paper'. As a European, that sends a shiver down my spine. How should I understand this?" Kananaikil's reply: "The way it is written there. They *are* Nazis, with their semi-military groups. They want a Hindu state, 'all power to the Hindus', and non-Hindus are second-class people. In fact, they want to perpetuate the monopoly and the power of the Brahmins."

[16] *Wereldwijd*, February 1991.

As for the "Nazi" allegation. The RSS training in stick fighting hardly makes it into a paramilitary group. Having practised Japanese stick and sword fighting for years, I dare to recommend it as a very good sport, but it is quite useless in a modern armed struggle. Sikh and Muslim and Maoist separatists do not waste time practising with sticks, they use machine-guns. Fact is that RSS people have been killed in large numbers in Panjab, and unlike a genuine militia, they have taken it lying down. If they had really been fascists, they would be dealing more sternly with anti-national agitators, including some of the missionaries. If our priest really wants to know what a "semi-military group" is, he should go and see in Northern Ireland: there, Protestant and Catholic Christians kill each other with sophisticated weaponry, and that without being called Nazis.

But the "Nazi" allegation is only secondarily directed against the Hindu "semi-military groups". Primarily, it is intended as a description of the caste system and its guardians, the ugly Brahmins with their "monopoly and power". If the *Indian Express* is described as a Nazi paper, it is (apart from Rajshekar's own exploded career as an *Indian Express* journalist) because it has objected to the implementation of the Mandal Report, which was advertised as a step towards the abolition of caste. We will deal with the relation between caste and Nazism in the next chapter.

The missionaries are great fans of the Mandal Report. When I first heard about this report, and about students setting fire to themselves in protest against its implementation, I thought it was all a bit overdone, and that these reservations, even if objectionable in principle, would not make much of a difference. But when I see the Mandal enthusiasm of those who have vowed to annihilate Hindu society, it is clear they perceive it as a mighty lever to break Hindu society open and rope in a lot of disoriented Hindus. Rajni Kothari, a committed advocate of the Mandal plan, who sees in it "the capacity to finish off the supremacy of Vedic Hinduism", is quoted in *Wereldwijd* with unquestioning approval.

I myself still do not hold any strong opinions on Mandal, but for the missionary lobby, it may be interesting to hear the opinion of P.C. Alexander, a well-meaning Indian Christian: "The first reaction among those already alarmed at the havoc that is being wrought by disruptionist doctrines in the country is: why unleash one more at this stage?... Tribal and caste wars have become seri-

ous threats now to national integration and unity which had been continuously subjected to a battering by communal conflicts of various types."[17] That is the voice of a post-Enlightenment Christian: not willing to risk a caste war and loss of human lives on uncertain promises of a political Kingdom of Heaven.

With Mandal, missionary sources have been applauding a system which they would never accept in their home countries: reservations ensuring that the services affected will by definition be manned for 50% by people who do not qualify. Indeed (but do not look for this information in any of the mission channels abroad), the Mandal proposals, as upheld by the Supreme Court in late 1992, stipulate that any Backward Caste candidate who gets recruited on merit, is included in the open category and taken out of the reserved percentage, which means that by definition, the latter is filled with people who are not qualified (the ruling strictly aplies to Other Backward Castes quota, but will be interpreted to be valid for the SC/ST quota as well, altogether amounting to 50% of the recruitment, and "in exceptional cases" even more). Many Mandal advocates always minimize the impact of Mandal, arguing that only a very small percentage of jobs in the country is affected by the quota system; but this argument itself implies that only a small percentage of SC/ST/OBC people will get a job this way, so that it must be possible to find among them a sufficient number of people who do qualify on merit. A system of positive discrimination can sometimes be justified (it is widely considered justified for SC/STs), but the Mandal proviso that 50% of the recruits must be sub-standard is unprecedented even in countries where positive discrimination is an established policy.

These details are, however, lost on the missionaries, who are too eager to see the Mandal potential for inter-Hindu conflict yield results. They do not mind a caste war, now that professor Kothari has okayed it: "As soon as oppressed people stand up, there is conflict." Hindu revival movements are explained as nothing but ugly Brahminical ploys to prevent such a good caste war. Our mission paper quotes with approval from *Dalit Voice*, with reference to L.K. Advani's *rathyatra* to Ayodhya (which took place two months after the Mandal plan was announced): "In their attempts to jeopardize the reservation policy, the Hindu Nazis have turned the

[17] *The Week*, 9/9/1990.

anti-Mandal madness into an anti-Muslim agitation. A Hindu Nazi leader and his Hindu Nazi troops are leaving a trail of death and destruction behind them."

The lengthy article does not contain a word about the long-term Islamic campaign to annihilate Hinduism, which forms the background of the Ayodhya movement. Instead, it contains a photograph of a crowd of Muslims on the steps of the Jama Masjid in Delhi, with the caption: "Muslims before the controversial Babri mosque in Ayodhya." The message conveyed is that this Babri Masjid, far from being the effective Hindu temple which it was in reality, was a flourishing mosque of which the numerous local Muslim community would be deprived by those greedy Hindu fanatics. I would never have suspected such crass disinformation from those mild mission-travellers, but there it is, black on white.[18]

The quote from *Dalit Voice* is equally untruthful. Firstly, the Ayodhya campaign had been going on since long before the Mandal upheaval, and was not just an advanced stage of the anti-Mandal mania. Secondly, while the anti-BJP governments in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had managed to get massive communal riots going, the trail of the Rathyatra was entirely free from riots. Except at one point: some anti-Mandal agitators threw stones at Advani for his refusal to clearly reject the Mandal proposals. So thirdly, far from being an anti-Mandal campaigner, L.K. Advani was just being a realistic politician, keeping an eye on the electoral effects of a stand for or against Mandal, and aware of the increasing weight of the Backward Castes lobby within his own party.

In their eagerness to see Hindu society explode and then to pick up the pieces for themselves, the missionaries try to reduce every dimension of Indian politics to a caste conflict. Even the communal agitation gets reduced to a ploy to control caste animosity, unconnected with the millennium-old Islamic aggression.

4.4. "Hinduism keeps them backward"

In the last sub-chapter, we looked into two anti-Hindu articles in the Christian mission paper *Wereldwijd*. The list of similar articles and documentary films wilfully blackening Hinduism is end-

[18] The same mosque photograph with a similar caption has been published in several other papers, including the leading Flemish daily *De Standaard*. Probably this disinformation took place in India, where some secularist in a news agency did a thorough job.

less. For a different kind of example, let us mention a film documentary about the legal aid and social upliftment movement among tribals, AWARE. It was provided with a Dutch background comment by the Belgian National Centre for Development Co-operation (NCOS), a public sector organization co-ordinating the work of both secular and missionary "development projects" in the Third World. The film itself had nothing to do with the Christian or Marxist vilification campaign. Contrary to the new anti-Gandhi trend in Dalit and missionary circles, it showed the tribals installing a Mahatma Gandhi statue, after they had met with success in one of their campaigns based on Gandhian methods and with a Gandhian inspiration of integration rather than divisiveness. The original English background comment had not contained any vilification, nor had its Dutch translation in the original draft.

Yet, in the first few minutes of the actual film, the background voice was talking about Hindu fatalism, the Hindu religion devised as a way of keeping the Backwards backward, and as the greatest hurdle for modernization, etc. During question time, I pointed out the glaring contradiction between the anti-Hindu introductory text and the actual Gandhian (i.e. reformist Hindu) inspiration of the AWARE movement as shown in the film. If we are supposed to change our thinking with an eye on the emerging "multi-cultural society", why is it that a fellow culture can be vilified so zealously? What if we made a film on the contrast between rich and poor in Western countries, and put the blame on Jesus, who has indeed said: "Unto all those who have, shall be given, shall even be given in plenty, but from him who does not have, even what he has shall be taken" (Matthew 25:29)?[19]

The translator of the background comment replied that he himself was also aware of the injustice being done to Hinduism in the introduction. This had also been pointed out to him by the AWARE people to whom the film had been shown. He disclaimed reponsibility, saying that the introduction had been added afterwards by one of the high-ups in the organization. I do not know who it was, but powerful people in the Development Co-operation sector consider it vital to blacken Hinduism before the Western public.

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[19] Because of this passage in Matthew's Gospel, the fact that "the rich get richer, the poor poorer", and that the rich even manage to corner benefits meant for the poor (e.g. by manipulating income data), is sometimes called the "Matthew effect".

The words of Bankim Chandra Chatterji are still to the point: "If the principles of Christianity are not responsible for the slaughter of the Crusades, the butcheries of Alva, the massacre of Saint Bartholomew or the flames of the Inquisition... I do not understand how the principles of Hinduism are to be held responsible for the civil disabilities of the Shudras under the Brahmanic regime. The critics of Hinduism have one measure for their own religion and another for Hinduism."[20]

In fairness, we must mention that an important section of the Christian intelligentsia rejects the ugly propaganda against rival traditions. A good example of the contrast between the two approaches is provided by the propaganda film *Gods of the New Age*, produced by Jeremiah Films, and a review of this film in the Hong Kong-based mission paper *Areopagus*.[21] The film is a "warning" against Asian and esp. Hindu influences in modern Western culture and religion. It contains the dirtiest tricks of propaganda: Bhagwan Rajneesh (alias Osho) is depicted as a typical representative of Hinduism, well-known shots of naked sadhus at the Kumbha Mela are claimed to have been "*smuggled* out of India", Satan is claimed to be the mastermind behind Kundalini Yoga because the Kundalini energy (whatever it may be) is represented by a *snake*, Rajneesh followers jumping up and down in a frenzy are presented as displaying the severe psychological damage done by Yoga, the Vishva Hindu Parishad is credited with a "strategy to convert the world", Mahatma Gandhi is presented as a sex pervert, the swastika is used to link Hinduism with Auschwitz, and the viewers are warned: "The religion that has all but destroyed India has now infiltrated the West."

Reviewer Richard Young refutes some of these allegations, and exposes the effrontery and dishonesty of the film's makers. Thus, Rajneesh's antics ("Tantric" group sex etc.) were repulsive to most Hindus, and Mr. Young rightly comments: "This is what the *West* has done to India! Rajneesh's innovations must be understood as a reaction *against* Hinduism." About the association of Hinduism with poverty, he remarks: "Imagine an India-made video showing a bejewelled and fur-coated American woman on a shopping spree

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[20] Quoted in Sitaram Goel: *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters*, p.81.

[21] *Areopagus*, Christmas 1990. A disclaimer is added by one of the "experts on Hinduism" interviewed in the film: he feels that his words before the camera have been manipulated, and that "the film has become a monument to the attempt not to understand the other party and to make any means serve the end".

in New York, groomed poodle on leash, accompanied by a commentary that deplores her ostentatious wealth and attributes this disgusting and pathetic over-consumption of the world's limited resources to her Christian faith. Would it be so simple? One can raise questions of this sort indefinitely: why are 'Christian' countries such as Mexico and the Philippines poor?"

About the Vishva Hindu Parishad's alleged missionary projects, Mr. Young takes a sportsman's view and asks: "The VHP was originally created to nurture such overseas Hindus, and what could be wrong with that, considering the many Christian ministries organized to help overseas Christians?... How can we object to the missionary acticities of Asian religions while at the same time insisting that they remain open to ours? Asia has been subject to intensive Western missionary activity over a period of several centuries, and the recent overseas activities of Hindus and others is minuscule in comparison. Yet India survived, the *Dharma* continues to flourish, and now that we are getting a dose of our own medicine, we squirm and insist that it's just not fair... Should not the same privilege be accorded to others that we ourselves have enjoyed?"

In this enlightened Christian's opinion, even missionaries of Christ should observe standards of fairness: "To idealize Christianity on the one hand as it exists in history and turn a blind eye to its blemishes, but insist on the other hand that Hinduism be judged by its worst side and not by its best, is to me at the root of the problem of this video. Surely Jesus shines brightly enough without slinging mud at other religions."

While refuting the impression of a Hindu conspiracy which the film seeks to convey, the reviewer observes: "The real conspiracy is in the video itself, which includes previews of other videos produced by Jeremiah Studios. It advertises one called *Tentmakers* [an allusion to Saint Paul, who continued his profession of tentmaking even while doing missionary work] which encourages Christians to work abroad and use their occupational cover as a means to propagate Christianity in countries where valid visas for missioanry workers are unobtainable or difficult to get. I am not arguing against evangelization (I am a missionary myself!), but it must be done straightforwardly." What is encouraged in this advertisement, is already being practised on a big scale: "The Indian government has become so paranoid about what the video romantically calls 'tentmakers' — and literally thousands of other so-called 'mission-

aries' who enter the country on short-term tourist visas only to engage in evangelization — that it has severely restricted the number of legitimate missionary visas for those who apply through the official channels... Sadly for the Churches, it gives the impression to governments that Christians are so devious that they will even break the law of a sovereign and democratic nation to accomplish their ends."

So there is an expression of a liberal type of Christianity, and at the same time a testimony to existing practices of the more fanatical type: thousands of undercover missionaries are active in India under false pretexts. You might think it was VHP propaganda, but it has been certified by a Christian witness above suspicion.

4.5. "Thought for the day" for mission sponsors

A number of V.T. Rajshekar's publications are transcripts of speeches given before Christian organizations who invite him as a respected spokesman on the Dalit issue. Christian papers abroad quote him as an authoritative source. For the information of Christian donors to the missions, here are some quotes from recent issues of *Dalit Voice*, a paper which their missionaries champion and advertise.

1) The *Protocols*. A contributor writes: "Please get a copy of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, from the Iranian embassy in Delhi to understand the zionist hatred against Blacks and Muslims... The people who are now ruling Israel are these deviated people and they have a different Torah called *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In this book they have stated their aim to destroy the moral fibre of all nations and their economy and then conquer the world."[22]

It is well-known to the donors in the West that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was a fabricated document used as "proof" of the Jewish conspiracy to take over the world, especially by the Nazis (it was originally created by the Czar's secret police). In the West, no editor would ever publish a reference to the *Protocols*, even in a guest column or reader's letter (which would still restore some credibility to this fabricated document). It is true that Islamic papers routinely refer to this document in their anti-Jewish tirades[23],

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[22] *Dalit Voice*, 1/12/1991.
[23] For instance, Ausaf Saied Vasfi's article "Beware Arafat beware" in *Islamic Order* (Karachi) 1989/1, reproduced from an earlier issue of *Radiance* (Delhi).

but using this piece of Nazi propaganda in a paper full of invective against the "Nazis" is very odd indeed.

The essential message of *The Protocols*, viz. that Jews are behind everything, is still carried by *Dalit Voice*. For instance, Jews are behind the murder of Rajiv Gandhi, in order to support their Brahminical allies: the "alleged Zionist (Mossad) connection in the murder of Rajiv Gandhi was aimed at averting the disaster of Janata Dal coming to power and installing an Aryan government headed by the Neogi Brahmin [i.e. Narasimha Rao]."[24]

Where you see conflicting systems and ideologies, like Communism vs. Capitalism, or nationalism vs. internationalism, don't be fooled: it is all just a show enacted by the Jewish mastermind. This is amply "proven" by Des Griffin in his books *Who Rules the World?* and *Protocols of Zion or Protocols of World Dictatorship*, and by Heinz Pfeiffer in his *Brothers of Shadow*, quoted with enthusiasm on the editorial page of *Dalit Voice*. For once, this page is not filled by Rajshekar himself, but by one K. Vijayaraju, who reveals: "Another book, *Protocols of the Wisemen of Zion*, first appeared in 1901... It was the master plan for world dictatorship. It was prepared according to Zionist belief. As Des Griffin says: 'The prophets have taught us that we have been chosen by God Himself to rule over the world. God himself has given us the necessary skills so that we are a match to this great [task].' (p.267) 'We have people of all opinions and persuasion in our service; men who want to reinstall a royal monarchy, demagogues, socialists, communists and every kind of utopist.' (p.274) 'The phenomenon of polarities is in accordance with the cosmic law. If we manage to use this for our benefit, this is roughly what the highest of our superiors said to themselves, then we will achieve the desired success. Two political blocks must therefore be set up: the West and the East.' (Heinz Pfeiffer)"[25]

So, the struggle between the West and the Soviet Block was a cunning creation of the Zionists, as was the Soviet Union itself. The struggle between Russian monarchists, liberals and social-democrats, and Bolsheviks, which ravaged Russia in 1917 and plunged it into Communist darkness for decades, was not a genuine struggle between genuinely contending parties: it was just a puppet show with the Jewish mastermind pulling the strings.

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[24] *Dalit Voice*, 1/11/1992.
[25] *Dalit Voice*, 16/1/1993.

Proof, if at all proof is needed, is that the Bolshevik "October revolution" was financed by Jewish capitalists: "A syndicate of international bankers to which both the Schiff Warburg clique as well as Morgan and Rockefeller belonged, financed the Russian revolution... Revolution and wars are very helpful to international bankers for making money and control governments. If you control the world capital you can control any government. Gold and money are monopolized by the international Jewish bankers. The Rothschilds in France and the Rockefellers in the US and their other colleagues control the world economy. They financed the 'socialist Revolution' and also the Nazi German Hitler. The motive is to gain money and to gain control. The First World War, the Second World War, the establishment of Communism, the rise of Hitler, were also systematically planned and executed by Zionists."[26]

It is no surprise then, that Karl Marx was also a party to this Jewish conspiracy: "An intellectual, by name Mordechai Marx Levy, alias Karl Marx, was hired in 1847 by the group 'League of the People' to write the *Communist Manifesto.* The Manifesto was intended as a demagogic bait for the masses. Karl Marx played a subordinate role in the whole affair. He was a pawn in the game of chess, which the real powers played behind the scenes. Marx, also a Jew, only modernized the plans and principles of Adam Weishaupt, the founder of Zionism." In fact, Marxism is "a Zionist invention to dominate the world".[27]

The "scientific" Marxist theory of "class struggle" is just a ploy to further the Jews' ethnic interests by distracting other ethnic groups from their real political interests: "The 'Wretched of the Earth' in Africa and India are not united along class lines. Then how can we say that the 'class struggle' theory is scientific?... The two Germanies got reunited on nationality lines whereas the USSR got divided on the same lines. Where was the inevitable 'scientific' class struggle? Jews got their homeland on the nationality question but not because of class struggle. The Jewish history is the best

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[26] *ibid.*

[27] *ibid.* Remark that while the Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world is a hostile projection buttressed by forgeries, Islam openly announces that it has "inherited the whole world" (Qur'an 39:74), that "the whole world belongs to the Muslims because it belongs to their God" (Iqbal, after Bukhari: chapter on *jihad, hadis* 406), that "*jihad* merely restores land to the Muslims, to whom it rightly belongs" (Ibn Taymiyah), that "Islam demands the world and will not be satisfied with less" (Maudoodi), and that "*jihad* means the conquest of all non-Muslim lands" (Khomeini).

example to prove that class struggle theory is bogus. This class struggle is the invention of master brains for a world dictatorship."[28] If you thought Hitler was dead, read *Dalit Voice*.

2) *Christians under Islamic rule*. Commenting on a complaint by the World Council of Churches about "marginalization" of Pakistani Christians and the pressure of "demands for islamization" on them, V.T. Rajshekar doesn't have a word of sympathy and support to offer, as he is quite happy with an aggressive Islam. Instead, he starts hair-splitting on the use of the term "lower caste Hindus", used by the WCC to describe the Pakistani Christians' ancestors: "We remember meeting one such dark-looking Christian at a Karachi hotel and after some conversation we could make out that his forefathers were Untouchables. And Untouchables are not 'lower caste' Hindus but casteless, outcaste people — the original inhabitants of undivided India. They are a separate race, separate nation."[29]

So it is this dark-looking separate race of ex-Untouchables that is now being harassed in Pakistan because they are not Muslims. But when it comes to Islam, Rajshekar completely renounces the defence of these persecuted Dalit Christians. He has no word of support for Dalits once they have to stand up to Islam. Please, Liberation Theology sleepwalkers, look carefully where *Dalit Voice's* loyalties lie.

The acid test of V.T. Rajshekar's loyalty might be his opinion on Sudan, where black indigenous people in the South are persecuted and massacred by light-skinned Arab Muslims from the North. Will he support the Blacks against their oppressors? No, for in a brief note, the southerners' struggle for survival and freedom is exposed as merely an American ploy to carve up this promising Islamic republic: "The American ruling class in its bid to act as the owner of the world in trying to break up Sudan. Its south-central area is being cleared of non-Arab Nuba tribals."[30] It is falsely suggested that the ethnic cleansing of this area is the work of American stooges, when in fact it has been carried out by the Arab northerners. Rajshekar supports the Islamic policy of keeping the south inside the Islamic Republic, i.e. of not letting the black non-Muslims escape from under the yoke of non-black Islamic rule.

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[28] *ibid.*
[29] *Dalit Voice*, 1/12/1991, emphasis in the original.
[30] *Dalit Voice*, 16/10/1992.

3) *Brahmins and Jews.* Rajshekar also writes: "The distinguished French historian and a Jew, Leon Poliakov, found fault with us for describing the Brahmins as the 'Jews of India'. He said Aryans were the very oppressors of Jews [in his book *Aryan Myth*]. He said it was the Aryan Brahmins who supplied their dangerous Aryan racist philosophy to the German philosophers of fascism which produced Hitler who later borrowed the Swastika from the Vedas. The Jews were the victims of Hitler's nazism."[31]

V.T. Rajshekar has claimed that Poliakov is a subscriber and admirer of *Dalit Voice*, and said that it was at Poliakov's request that he had suspended the use of his long-standing designation of Brahmins as "Jews of India". But that was a while ago, and now V.T. Rajshekar goes back to his anti-Jewish roots: "This may be true then but today the very Jews and India's brahminical forces have joined hands to unitedly crush the Muslims. We don't know when the brahminical order had oppressed the Jews. We don't know when the Brahminical Social Order had opposed the Jews. Be that as it may, even if we accept Leon Poliakov's argument as true, today he stands disproved and we have proved right. And our comparison of Jews and 'Jews of India' has also proved right."[32]

How interesting that Rajshekar, who always calls the Brahmins Nazis to associate them with the guilt of the genocide on the Jews, admits: "We don't know when the Brahminical order had oppressed the Jews." We don't know either, but we do know that Brahminical India was the only place (except for Kaifeng in China) where the Jews have been allowed to stay, to thrive, to practise their religion, without suffering any pogroms and persecutions. The only ground for affirming that the Brahminical order has ever oppressed the Jews, is by making Nazism a part of it. That is of course farcical, but for V.T. Rajshekar it should be a normal thing to do, considering his consistent use of the word Nazi as a synonym for "Hindu" or "Brahmin". If he now suddenly refuses to link Brahminism with Nazism in its anti-Jewish dimension, it is because he absolutely has to lump Jews and Brahmins in the same satanic bag, to please his Muslim sponsors and his own Islamic agenda. This even leads him to making ludicrous statements such as: "Brahminism is mother of Zionism."[33]

[31] *Dalit Voice*, 1/2/1992.
[32] *ibid.*
[33] *Dalit Voice*, 1/7/1992.

coming true as the Jews are controlling the Pentagon and CIA, not to speak of Lebanon and West Asia."

The entire USA are controlled by the Jews and their extension, the Freemasons. So is the UNO. And even the Vatican. Quoting with approval from the German anti-Jewish periodical *Christ State International*, a *Dalit Voice* correspondent informs us: "The German journal discloses [that] the American dollar currency note carries the Zionist pyramid [and] that of the 56 who signed the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, 50 were Freemasons. The American billionaire Rockefeller is repeatedly mentioned as a top Zionist functionary... The new President Clinton is supposed to be a Zionist nominee. [The same paper] says that the United Nations is a slave of the Zionists. So also the IMF and World Bank. More shocking is the disclosure that the Vatican is closely allied with the Zionists. So also the Rotary International and the Lions International... It discloses that the Zionists have already 'succeeded in controlling the thought world... to such an extent that nearly all other citizens who are not insiders look upon the events of the world through the coloured glasses which we have put on their noses'... The journal hints at Gorbachov's Zionist connection on the basis of the 'forefinger pose': 'The raised or outstretched forefinger is the sign language of the Zionists.'... In Germany, Zionists maintain a hold on the government even today."[36]

That much, I am sure, you already knew. What you may not yet know is that Brahmins are also involved in the Zionist-Freemason conspiracy: "What will come as a shock to India is the Zionist connection of the Theosophical Society and its Russian founder Blavatsky. Theosophy has been the heart of Tamil Brahmins, many of whom held top positions in the organization. Annie Besant, a British woman who held top positions in the Indian National Congress, was a Theosophist... The most important thing we learnt after reading the different documents quoted in the German journal, *Christ State International* (special edition no.9, May 1992) is the great similarity between the Zionist thought and the language used in the Aryan 'sacred books' of India's Brahminical Social Order (BSO). Since the BSO is much more ancient it is quite likely that the Zionist founding fathers got their inspiration from the BSO... Dalit Voice has thus proved right in predicting that the Jews and

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[36] *Dalit Voice*, 16/1/1993.

the 'Jews of India' will join hands to crush Muslims, Blacks and India's Dalits."[37]

The American Congressman Stephen Solarz, known as a friend of both Israel and India, has served for long as the perfect illustration of the CIA-Zionist-Brahminical conspiracy. When he lost the 1992 elections after a re-drawing of constituency boundaries (calculated to give the Black and Hispanic vote more weight), *Dalit Voice* claimed that the Blacks had shown their solidarity with the Palestinians and Dalits by voting Solarz out. This is part of Rajshekar's most simple world view: "So, the world today is divided into two neat camps: (1) imperialism, racism, Zionism, Brahmanism, on one side, and (2) those opposed to it on the other side: Muslims, Blacks and India's Dalits."[38]

4) *Islamic child brides.* In a lengthy editorial, V.T. Rajshekar comments on the Ameena case.[39] An elderly Arab had married 12-year-old Ameena from Hyderabad, in violation of the Indian law against child marriage; she had been stopped on the airplane that was to take her to Arabia, thanks to a keen stewardess. Some Hindus had spoken out against this practice of Arabs buying child brides in India, and so Mr. Rajshekar vigorously defended these child marriages: "Child marriage not un-Islamic", and exposed the state intervention against the marriage as "a Hindu Nazi bid for a Spanish experiment to exterminate Muslims in India". The fact that Ameena herself, according to her own declaration to the police, had expressed her unwillingness to marry this man, is nowhere taken into consideration (while Islamic law at least has the merit of prescribing that marriage, unlike concubinage with abducted Kafir girls, be voluntary).

Not all that Rajshekar writes is crazy: it is true that for many girls in Ameena's situation, the alternative to becoming a child bride is becoming a child prostitute. Many parents prefer to have their children marry early than to let them go astray: an old-fashioned custom that may have some wisdom which modern laws are lacking. But what Christian paper will write that it supports the breach of progressive laws against child marriage? What missionary will tell this to his sponsors?

Mr. Rajshekar also demands the suspension of the airhostess

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[37] *ibid.*
[38] *Dalit Voice*, 1/7/1992.
[39] *Dalit Voice*, 1/12/1991.

who had lifted Ameena's veil. In a subsequent issue, reader Mrs. C.V. Lakshmi congratulates him: "As you have rightly said, the Indian Airlines airhostess who lifted the veil of Ameena in the plane, should be immediately suspended for the offence of poking her dirty Hindu nose in the personal affairs of a poor Muslim girl."[40]

5) *Dalai Lama.* Quoting from memory, I may also mention Rajshekar's comment on Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China. Rajiv sold out the Indian interests, made effective concessions on India's claim to its Chinese-occupied territories, stabbed the Tibetan people in the back with his repeated acceptance of the Chinese occupation, and that without even asking Chinese support on the Kashmir issue in return. Rajshekar, true to his own dictum: "What Hindus hate, we must love, and what Hindus love, we must hate"[41], opposes India's integrity, and calls those who criticized Rajiv's sell-out "Nazi war mongers". He goes on to puke venom on the Tibetan freedom struggle and on the Dalai Lama, who likes to hang out with upper-caste Nazis. And all that in the name of Dr. Ambedkar, who was a firm nationalist, a Buddhist, and (along with that other pro-Backwards politician, Rammanohar Lohia) a sharp critic of Jawaharlal Nehru's support for China's occupation of Buddhist Tibet. Rajshekar is not on the side of the oppressed, but on the side of powerful interest groups who intend to destroy Hinduism (including Buddhism) at any cost.

Naturally, *Dalit Voice* supports Communist China, which sells weapons to Iran, divides Indian territory with Pakistan, and continues to pose a threat to India's safety: "*Dalit Voice* has been a great supporter and admirer of China. The editor of *Dalit Voice* has twice visited China... On both the occasions, the Chinese leaders had expressed deep concern over the persecution of Dalits and even promised support... When the Americans instigated and engineered a student riot at Tiananmen square in Beijing, we vehemently stood by Beijing and denounced the Americans. We had even supported China's stand on the India-China border question and denounced the Dalai Lama."[42]

Unfortunately, China seems to have other priorities: "But Beijing in turn showed no concern either on Dalit or Muslim persecution in India. Not only that. During the 1990 Gulf War, China

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[40] *Dalit Voice*, 1/2/1992.
[41] *Dalit Voice*, 16/2/1992, with reference to earlier statements by the editor.
[42] *Dalit Voice*, 1/2/1992.

supported the American aggression on Iraq... China has disappointed us... We are now gradually realizing that the yellow-skinned Mongoloid races, if permitted, would prefer to go with Whites rather than with Blacks or Browns."

Nevertheless, and in spite of the Dalai Lama's regular presence at Ambedkarite neo-Buddhist functions, the antipathy towards the Dalai Lama remains. In an advance critique of a planned film by Mira Nair on Buddha's life, a *Dalit Voice* correspondent writes: "The Dalai Lama, who is close to Hindu Nazis, says Buddha belonged to Hinduism!!! The film's sinister design is to bring Dalits (Buddhists) closer to Hinduism. If this is true, we can conclude that Dalai Lama is an agent of Hindus... By flirting with Nazis, he only proved that his Buddhism was a brahminized version and that there was an urgent need for Babasaheb's Buddha Dhamma to be rescued from the Nazis. Dalits all over India should stop the fabrication of history through this film by taking appropriate action."[43] And: "Dalai Lama is appointed by the US to malign China, and Hindu Nazis ask him to praise their Nazi Dharma and destroy the work done by Babasaheb [Ambedkar]. And that is how he got the Nobel Prize... It is high time we start an agitation to oust this Western/Hindu Nazi stooge who is playing anti-Buddhist and anti-Babasaheb politics sitting on our Dravidian soil."[44]

6) *Mother Teresa*. Even Mother Teresa, the Albanian-born Catholic charity worker in Calcutta, and a sacred cow of modern Christianity, is not safe from racist insinuations by *Dalit Voice*. The paper quotes her protest against reports that her organization practises charity with the aim of converting people to Christianity: "The report maintains that the main aim of the Missionaries of Charity is to convert people of other religions to Christianity and to give these girls in marriage to Christian boys. This is not true... I am deeply shocked to see this report which I feel is harmful to our work of love." So far, so good: there is indeed scope for discussion about the motives of contemporary "missionaries" — even Catholics are not sure anymore whether converting others is something one should try for (though in Europe at least, the conclusion of the said report, viz. that she does it for the sake of conversion, is not a matter of doubt at all).

What is more problematic, is the comment by the *Dalit Voice*

[43] *Dalit Voice*, 16/5/1992.
[44] *Dalit Voice*, 1/12/1992.

correspondent. He describes the allegation as "the latest assault on her by this ungrateful Aryan nation", and wonders why she keeps on "sincerely serving" these ungrateful Aryans: "Once bitten twice shy. But poor Teresa is not. Because she too is an Aryan. And both Teresa and the Aryans are together fooling us."[45]

Would the liberation theologians who brandish *Dalit Voice* dare to tell their supporters what exactly it is that they are supporting, including this "Aryan Mother Teresa is fooling us" thing? Does anyone seriously believe that Christians are going to have any sympathy for Rajshekar's causes once they find out what he really stands for? With *Dalit Voice*, the Christian missions are holding a viper to their breast. Either that may be a necessity resulting from (and indicating) the viper-like character of their own undertaking. If not, they are naively supporting an agitator who in the long run can only play into the hand of Islam, to the detriment of even the Christian missions themselves, which will be thrown away after use.

7) *Think of the future.* I want to invite the mission strategists, who have given ample proof of their capacity for long-term planning, to visualize a problem they will be facing in the near future. In the North-East, a massive infiltration of Bangladeshi Muslims is going on. It is bound to accelerate. The Bangladeshi population doubles in less than 30 years, which means that in 2020 there will be, very roughly, some 230 million of them. Today, the country is not able to look after itself, and apart from economic resources, space itself is becoming extremely scarce. So, in the coming decades, crores of people will have to leave the country. Squeezing out the minorities will not be enough: crores of Muslims will try to find a place elsewhere, most of them in India.

Very soon, the tribal areas where Christianity reigns supreme (Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland) will be swamped with Muslim immigrants. Today, nearly all the border districts of Assam and West Bengal already have a Muslim majority. Terrorist gangs like ULFA and the Tripura Tribal Front are replenishing their ranks with Muslim immigrants. Large-scale land-grabbing by these immigrants has caused bloody confrontations with the local population. Do the mission strategists really think that *Dalit Voice* will change its opposition to influx control simply because it is not Hindu but

[45] *Dalit Voice*, 1/12/1991.

Christian areas that are overrun? The states which the missions have carved out of Assam may become so many Lebanons, with a growing percentage of Muslims making demands for their "fair democratic share", and taking it if it is not given. These "non-Aryan" Mongoloid tribals will be overrun by foreign invaders speaking an "Aryan" language. But these Aryan invaders are also Muslims. Now, honestly, where do the mission strategists think V.T. Rajshekar's loyalty will lie, with the non-Aryan tribals or with the Aryan Muslims? Do they think the anti-Hindu coalition of which Mr. Rajshekar is a champion, will spare them once Islam goes marching in?

The "minorities' front" against Hinduism is, on closer analysis, not a joint effort for joint progress of at least the concerned minorities. It is an Islamic ploy which is bound to backfire on the Sikhs, Dalits, Christians and on whomsoever is not part of the Islamic vanguard. If the missionaries have the good sense to compare their experiences in India and Pakistan, they should be able to see that the cause of religious freedom and pluralism is served best by the strengthening of India, and by the containment of Islamic aggression.

8) *Mohammed X.* Whatever one may think about V.T. Rajshekar, one has to admit that he is ready to face criticism, or at least to publish it in his paper (e.g. protests by Buddhists against his pro-Islamic line). This compares favourably with the publications of noted "secularists", who spare no effort to black out dissenting opinions (e.g. the books on the Ayodhya affair edited by Sarvepalli Gopal and by Asghar Ali Engineer, who claim to give a balanced overview but purposely ignore the most important formulations of the viewpoint which is not their own).[46] We may quote a significant letter by Syed Yusuf from Delhi, introduced as an office-bearer of the Jamaat-i Islami:

"The Dalit Voice reproduction of an excerpt from Wayne B. Chandler's book *The Moor: The Light of Europe's Dark Age* (DV 16/10/1991), with an interrogation whether Prophet Mohammed was a Black or a White is *highly objectionable and mischievous*, besides being a crude attempt on your part to discriminate the human race on the basis of colour. Though himself a White, the holy prophet of Islam emphatically denied claims of superiority over race or col-

[46] S. Gopal: *Anatomy of a Confrontation* (Viking/Penguin, Delhi 1991); A.A. Engineer: *Babri Masjid Ram Janmabhoomi Controversy* (Ajanta Publ., Delhi 1990).

our... Please spare Islam in your anxiety to establish the superiority of the Blacks over the Whites or vice versa."[47] In his reply, the editor defends himself by invoking the need for solidarity with the Black Muslims of the US, who "take great pride in Prophet Mohammed for his colour". He claims that he himself has never said that Mohammed was black, and that it is Syed Yusuf who is "alienating the sympathies of the Blacks" by asserting that the Prophet was white. He seems to forget that Malcolm X, the legendary Black leader, broke with Black Muslim racism after his pilgrimage to Mecca, where Mohammed's tribesmen all turned out to be pale-faces.

Incidentally, the authoritative Islamic *Hadis* collections give all the details about Mohammed's physical appearance, including his pale rosy skin colour and his un-Negroid hairiness. Mr. Rajshekar's united front of Black Muslims and "Black Untouchables" is indeed based on a pitiable crank racism.

4.6. Anti-Brahminism

In Europe, a great many dissertations and books have been written on the subject of anti-Judaism. By contrast, in India, there are only a handful of studies (mostly sympathizing) of anti-Brahminism as a political movement, and no studies at all on the development of anti-Brahminism as an ideology. And yet, anti-Brahminism and anti-Semitism are similar and related phenomena. We will give a brief outline, by way of invitation to scholars to write such a much-needed in-depth study.

For as long as Brahmins have existed, people have cut jokes about them, just like there are the more recent Sikh jokes, and elsewhere there are Irish jokes etc. Secular Hindu literature is full of taunts and parodies of Brahmins, as of other easily identifiable and somewhat special communities. But that is only a natural phenomenon in a free and healthy society, an entirely different matter from ideological anti-Brahminism.

The first type of ideological anti-Brahminsim is Islamic anti-Brahminism, which we find in medieval writings since at least Amir Khusrau, dearest disciple of Sheikh Nizamuddin Awliya, the Sufi luminary of Delhi. The Muslims condemn Brahmins as the leaders of infidelism and as the most important obstacle to the islamization

[47] *Dalit Voice*, 1/12/1991. Emphasis in the original.

of India. Not that they ever condemn Brahmins as oppressors of the other castes. They never even notice the institution of caste (except for the descriptive work of Albiruni), and it is nothing but an oft-repeated lie that Muslims brought liberation from caste inequality. Their anti-Brahminism was never motivated by any social concern, but strictly by the religious concern of converting India into a *Dar-ul-Islam*.

But this Islamic anti-Brahminism is a relatively minor phenomenon. Firstly, the over-all Muslim struggle against Hinduism was a physical struggle, with little of ideological polemic. Secondly, it is a dead-end stream, because today, now that Muslims are seriously engaged in apologetics and ideological campaigns, the anti-Brahmin chapter of their propaganda is borrowed from the more developed Christian and "secular" anti-Brahminism rather than from their own medieval writers.

What deserves to be highlighted about this Islamic anti-Brahminism, is that it is the Indian counterpart of Mohammed's own anti-Jewish campaign. It is well-known that Mohammed expelled some Jews, extorted half the income of others, slaughtered yet others, and finally ordered their total removal from his domains. The Quran contains strong invective against the Jews, including calls to make war on them. In the Hadis, Mohammed is reported as saying: "Fight the Jews until even the rock behind which a Jew is hiding, calls you and says: 'O, fighter of Allah, there is a Jew behind me: come and kill him.'" (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 56:94)

The Jews in Arabia were literate people, who readily saw through Mohammed's prophetic performances, and who could point out from where Mohammed had borrowed his theological insights (claimed as "revealed"), often in a distorted version. The Jews could be scared with a display of armed might, they could be put to flight on humiliating conditions, but they could not be made to alter their well-founded judgment of Mohammed's claims. Totalitarian forces are always most afraid of such independent opinion; the mere fact that someone is quietly unimpressed by the belief which is sought to be imposed, is unbearable to them. And that is also one of the reasons why the Brahmins, like the Jews, were singled out for polemists' invective and for persecution.

While the Muslims' intellectual contribution to anti-Brahminism was small, their physical onslaught on Brahminism was all the more determined. Wilhelm von Pochhammer writes: "What the

Brahmins as protectors of their culture achieved in those days, has never been properly recorded, probably because a considerable number of people belonging precisely to this class had been slaughtered. If success was achieved in preserving Hindu culture in the hell of the first few centuries, the credit undoubtedly goes to the Brahmins. They saw to it that not too many chose the cowardly way of getting converted and that the masses remained true to the holy traditions on which culture rested..."[48]

The true prophets of the anti-Brahmin message were no doubt the Christian missionaries. In the 16th century, Francis Xavier wrote that Hindus were under the spell of the Brahmanas, who were in league with evil spirits, and that the elimination of Brahminism was the first priority in the large operation of bringing Salvation to the wretched Pagans of India. In this endeavour, he strongly advocated and practised the use of force. Unfortunately for him, the Portuguese government could not always spare the troops which he so passionately asked for. Still, the destruction wrought by Francis Xavier was impressive, and he has described the joy he felt on seeing idols being smashed and temples demolished.[49]

Within the Portuguese territories, physical persecution of Paganism naturally hit the Brahmins hardest. Treaties with Hindu kings had to stipulate explicitly that the Portuguese must not kill Brahmins. But in the case of Christian anti-Brahminism, these physical persecutions were a small matter compared to the systematic ideological and propagandistic attack on Brahminism, which has conditioned the views of many non-missionaries and has by now been amplified enormously because Secularists, Akalis, Marxists and Muslims have joined the chorus. In fact, apart from anti-Judaism, the anti-Brahmin campaign started by the missionaries is the biggest vilification campaign in world history.

While the Portuguese mission establishment was unanimous in branding the Brahmins as the chief obstacle to the Salvation of India, there was some dissent concerning the tactics to be employed against them. Robert de Nobili believed in fraud rather than force. He dressed as a Brahmin, and taught the "Yesurveda", a fifth Veda which had been lost in India, but which the emigrant commu-

[48] *India's Road to Nationhood: a Political History of the Subcontinent* (1961), quoted by Prof. K.S. Lal in *Legacy of Muslim Rule in India*.
[49] See Sitaram Goel: *History of Hindu Christian Encounters*, ch.4.

nity of "Romaka Brahmins" had preserved. He seems to have had a few followers, but after his death, nothing remained of his infiltration movement. Recently he has been declared the patron saint of the theology of inculturation, and his method is being actualized and perfected in the "Christian ashrams".

De Nobili's approach was one possible application of the Jesuits' larger strategy, which aimed at converting the elite in the hope that they would carry the masses with them. This approach had been tried in vain in China, in Japan, and even at the Moghul court (today, it is finally meeting with a measure of success in South Korea). A practical implication of this strategy was that Christianity had to be presented as a noble and elitist religion. This came naturally to the Jesuits, who (unlike, for instance, the Franciscans) styled themselves as an elite order.

Most importantly, that stage of missionary endeavour did not make use of any populist or democratic rhetoric of "equality". At that time, political equality was not yet on the ideological agenda. On the contrary, even when in the 18th and 19th century, equality became a political hot item, the Church opposed it tooth and nail, and supported the aristocratic *Ancien Régime* and its "Restoration" after the fall of Napoleon. Only in the late 19th century, when atheist socialism lured the urban masses away from Christianity, did the Church evolve what is known as the "social teachings of the Church", formulated in encyclicals like *Rerum Novarum*. Before that time, any opposition of the Catholic Church (and of most Protestant Churches) against the caste system and the Brahmin caste had strictly nothing to do with a concern for social equality.

Recent claims that equality is an intrinsic and cardinal virtue of Christianity, and that the apostle Thomas came to India in AD 52 with a message of equality, abolition of caste, and women's rights, are so many lies. Thus, C.A. Simon writes: "The oppressed and downtrodden followed [Saint Thomas] and claimed equal status in society as it was denied them by the prevailing social norms. He condemned untouchability and attempted to restore equal status for women."[50] That Saint Thomas ever came to India is already a myth, only kept alive in India with a lot of Christian-cum-secularist media effort; that he came with an Ambedkarist and feminist mes-

[50] C.A. Thomas: *In Memory of a Slain Saint*, published in the Madras edition of *Express Weekend*, 30/12/1989; reprinted in Ishwar Sharan: *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple* (Voice of India, Delhi 1991), p.23-26.

sage is just ridiculous.

The source of the Thomas legend is an apocryphal text called the *Acts of Thomas.* If the missionaries want to continue to present it as history rather than legend, they should accept the consequences. In that case, they must also tell the public about the way in which Thomas' journey to India started, according to the very same text: he left Palestine because his twin brother Jesus sold him as a slave (Thomas is also called *Didymos*, "the twin brother"). They must give details of the destructive sorcery which Thomas practised, as in his first miracle, when he made a lion devour a boy for being impolite. They must tell the public that Thomas was put to death not by the ugly Brahmins but by the king who, after having had a lot of patience with him, and after offering him a safe exit from the country, decided to put a stop to his practice of luring women away from their homes and putting them in sackcloth and ashes behind locked doors, etc.

Briefly, if it is true that the apostle Thomas came to India, then the following information furnished by the *Acts of Thomas* is also true:

1. Thomas was an anti-social character;
2. Jesus was a slave trader;
3. Thomas was Jesus' twin brother, implying that the four canonical Gospels are unreliable sources which have concealed a crucial fact, viz. that Jesus was not God's Only-Begotten Son. In fact, Jesus and Thomas were God's Twin-Born Sons. In other words, accepting the Thomas legend as history is equivalent to exploding the doctrinal foundation of Christianity.

The original Christian doctrine on equality has been very well expressed by Saint Paul, who opposed attempts by slaves to free themselves, because "we have all been freed in Christ" and that should be enough.[51] Saint Paul's *Letter to Philemon* is actually a "covering note" which he sent along with a runaway slave whom he returned to the legal owner, the Christian convert Philemon.

A Christian Bible commentary admits: "Slavery was such an integral part of the social structure of the day that to preach freedom would have been tantamount to revolution. Paul's brief was not to engage in political campaigning but to preach a Gospel

[51] For Saint Paul on slavery, see Eph.6:5-9, Col.3:22-4:1, 1 Tim.6:1-2, Phil. See also Peter 2:18ff.

capable of transforming human life from within."[52] This is a poor excuse: religious pluralism was also an integral part of the dominant culture, and yet Christianity confronted and destroyed it. Why should God make compromises with the world? The fact of the matter is that Saint Paul wanted to convert people to his own belief system, and that he was not interested in other, non-Salvationist pursuits such as social reform.

If the missionaries were sincerely unhappy with the institution of caste, it was not because of its intrinsic inequality. The problem with caste was that it offered a lot of communal togetherness, social security and a certain pride in one's caste identity. Through the missionary propaganda, we have come to see caste as an exclusion-from, but in the first place it is a belonging-to. Even for the lowest castes, humiliation by higher-placed people on account of caste did not outweigh the considerable benefits of belonging to at least some caste. This caste cohesion is an important reason why Hinduism could survive where the cultures of West Asia disappeared under the onslaught of Islam. The missionaries found that people were not willing to give up their caste by converting to Christianity, which implied breaking with a number of caste customs. The only way to convert people, was to convert entire caste groups and allowing them to retain some of their caste identity.

Therefore, far from abolishing caste, the Church allowed caste distinctions to continue even within its own structure and functioning. Pope Gregory XIV (1621-23) formally sanctioned caste divisions in the Indian Church.[53]

It is therefore not true that the Church's motivation in blackening the Brahmins had anything to do with a concern for equality. The Church was against equality in the first place, and even when equality became the irresistible fashion, the Church allowed caste inequality to continue wherever it considered it opportune to do so. As a missionary has admitted to me: in Goa, many churches still have separate doors for high-caste and low-caste people, and caste discrimination at many levels is still widespread. Commenting on the persistence of caste distinctions in the Church, a Dalit convert told me: "I feel like a frog who has jumped from one

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[52] David and Pat Alexander eds.: ***The Lion Handbook to the Bible*** (Lion Publ., England 1973), p.625.

[53] Ishwar Sharan: *op. cit.*, p.47. This papal bull confirmed earlier decisions of the local Church hierarchy in 1599 and 1606.

muddy pool into another pool just as muddy."

Wherever the Church feels it should accomodate existing caste feelings in settled Christian communities, it accepts them; and wherever it thinks it profitable to take a bold anti-caste stand before a Dalit public, it will do just that. It is true that contemporary missionaries, who have grown up with the idea of social equality, mostly have a sincere aversion for caste inequality, and are more dependable when it comes to conducting Church affairs in a caste-neutral way (as opposed to Indian Christians who insistently claim descent from high-caste converts). But when considering the mission machine as a whole, we must say that the missionary commitment to equality and social justice is not sincere, but is an opportunistic policy motivated by greed for conversions.

In the past century, the Churches one after another came around to the decision that the lower ranks of society should be made the prime target of conversion campaigns. Finding that the conversion of the high-caste people was not getting anywhere, they settled for the low-castes and tribals, and adapted their own image accordingly. One implication was that the Brahmins were no longer just the guardians of Paganism, but also the antipodes of the low-castes on the caste ladder. A totally new line of propaganda was launched: Brahmins were oppressors of the low-caste people.

In the proliferating mission schools, the missionary version of Indian history, including its view on caste, was taught to Indian pupils, and many interiorized the hostile and motivated story which they had been fed. One of them was Jotirao Phule of Maharashtra, the first modern leader to be called Mahatma. His position, while not yet all-out anti-Hindu, was strongly anti-Brahmin. He wrote: "The Brahmin's natural (instinctive) temperament is mischievous and cantankerous, and it is so inveterate that it can never be eradicated."[54]

Then already, the Aryan Invasion theory was the alpha and omega of the version of Indian history spread by anti-Brahminism. Phule's book *Slavery* starts out with this view of history: "Recent researches have shown beyond a shadow of doubt that the Brahmins were not the Aborigines of India... Aryans came to India not as simple emigrants with peaceful intentions of colonization, but as

[54] Quoted in *Dalit Voice*, 16/12/1992, from *Selections of Mahatma Phule's Works* (Government of Maharashtra 1992), vol.2, p.72.

conquerors. They appear to have been a race imbued with very high notions of self, extremely cunning, arrogant and bigoted."[55]

For Phule, there could be no progress for the low-caste people without taking harsh anti-Brahmin measures, e.g.: "Let there be schools for the Shudras in every village, but away with all Brahmin schoolmasters."[56] This was exactly what the missionary school builders wanted him to say. Through Phule, the missionary indoctrination has influenced all 20th century anti-Brahmin leaders.

Even among the champions of the Hindu cause, anti-Brahminism acquired a following. The Hindu reform movement Arya Samaj rejected Brahminism and its heretical brain-children, idolatry and the caste system, as utterly non-Vedic. Brahmin temples were desecrated in the name of Hinduism. Orthodox Brahmins were attacked as the traitors to Hindu interests.

Thus, it was said in those circles that when in the 1880s the Maharajah of Kashmir wanted to reconvert the forcibly converted Muslims in his domains, the Brahmins rejected this timely proposal, arguing from their obscurantist Shastras that that one is only a Hindu by birth. This well-known allegation has been argued to be unhistorical (though of course, nobody denies that mindlessly scripturalist Brahmins do exist, in dwindling numbers): it cannot be traced farther back than 1946, sixty years after the facts which it claims to describe.[57] Admittedly, this *argumentum e silentio* is not strong in itself, but it is strengthened by the fact that Brahmins have reconverted ex-Hindus ever since the forcible conversions by Mohammed bin Qasim in 712. The ritual effecting "conversion" into the Arya fold has been available and in use since Vedic times.

Yet, the story of the Kashmiri Pandits' refusal to impart reconversion has plausibility on its side, and I would not exclude the possibility that first-hand evidence may surface one day. Several motives to refuse reconversion were at work, with the ultra-orthodox aversion for ritually defiled ex-beef-eaters not even the most important one. Under Muslim rule, occasional refusals of pleas for reconversion were motivated more by fear of the Muslims (who would kill the apostate from Islam and the ones who had "seduced" him into apostasy) than by an ultra-orthodox rejection of

[55] J. Phule: *Slavery* (1873), republished as vol.1 of *Collected Works of Mahatma Jotirao Phule*, p. xxix-xxx.
[56] *ibid.*, p.xxxix.
[57] The matter is discussed in Jeevan Kulkarni: *Historical Truths & Untruths Exposed*, p.36-39 (with reference to Kolbert: *Danger in Kashmir*, 1946).

"defiled" converts. The fear instilled by Islam tends to linger for decades after the end of the physical Muslim threat, as is evident from the analogous situation of terrorized Hindus who, even after 1947, can still not relinquish the mental habit of praising and justifying Islam.

Another motive is provided by a kind of jealousy on the part of people who have suffered, and who feel it is injust to restore to equal membership of the commmunity those who have betrayed the community in order to escape this suffering. For an analogy: the philosopher and leader of the Jewish community Moses Maimonides was faced with the widespread rejection of those Jews who had converted to Islam under the Almohad persecutions and volunteered to come back when the worst was over. There is sufficient reason to assume that many candidates for reconversion to Hinduism have been turned down by Kashmiri Pandits and other guardians of Hindu Dharma; but this was certainly not a general rule.

There is ample Christian testimony from the 16th to the 19th century that the majority of converts were taken back into the Hindu fold, and that those who remained Christian were mostly "the individuals who, driven out of their castes on account of their vices or scandalous transgressions of their usages, are shunned afterwards by everybody".[58] The people affected by this conversion and reconversion process were mostly, but not exclusively, from the lower castes.

Just as well, the missionaries knew whom to hold responsible for their failure: "The Brahmin is therefore well worth looking at! We have more to do with him than with the Czar of all the Russians. The battle we have to fight with him is not against guns or rifles, not against flesh and blood."[59] This assessment, written in a mood of vexation by Rev. Norman MacLeod in 1871, was comparatively mild next to what Abbé Dubois had written (and of which MacLeod approved) in 1820: "And there is no stronghold of evil so impregnable as Brahmins."[60]

The main well-spring of anti-Brahminism is doubtlessly the Christian missionaries' greedy design to rope in the souls of Hin-

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[58] Quoted in J. Kulkarni: *op.cit.*, p.39, from N. MacLeod: *Peeps at the Far East*, London 1871.

[59] *ibid.*

[60] *ibid.*

dus. From there onwards, it spread through the entire English-educated class and ultimately became an unquestionable dogma in India's political parlance. Communist historians and sociologists have been fortifying it by rewriting Indian history as a perennial struggle between Brahmin oppressors and the rest. When defending the Mandal report in 1990, the then Prime Minister of India V.P. Singh could say that Brahmins have to do penance for the centuries of oppression which they inflicted on the Backwards, without anyone questioning his historical assumptions. Anti-Brahminism is now part of the official doctrine of the "secular, socialist republic" of India.

4.7. Anti-Brahminism: recent instances

When the independence movement was launched, and its leaders turned out to be mostly Brahmins, the British secular authorities started contributing to the anti-Brahmin campaign in a fairly big way. They actively involved themselves in the founding of the "non-Brahmin" Justice Party in Madras Presidency in 1916. The all-India political effect of this party's (electorally unsuccessful) career is summed up by Dr. P. Ramarajan: "It cannot be gainsaid that this party introduced 'caste idiom' into the politics of South India,... The non-Brahminization of the Congress in the 1930s was an inevitable consequence of this political development. It should be said to the credit of the Justice Party that it succeeded in dislodging the Brahmins from their privileged positions."[61]

After the election debacle of 1937, the leadership of the Justice Party devolved on E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker. "He believed in agitational politics rather than in constructive political activities... The secular disposition of the Justice Party was also thrown to the winds when he turned out to be a strong advocate of atheism... a new slogan of an independent Dravidian state was raised... The Justice Party which had a moribund existence under E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker died at last in 1944 when he changed its name into *Dravida Kazhagam* (DK). However, Naicker as a political agitator kept the ethos of non-Brahminism alive..."[62]

Indeed he did. Attacking Brahmins on the street to cut their sacred thread and their tuft of hair was a favourite form of anti-Brahmin agitation. That was only the playful variety, because

[61] P. Ramarajan: *The Justice Party* (Poompozhil Publ., Madras 1988), p.277.
[62] *ibid.*, p.278.

Naicker gained fame with statements like: "If you see a snake and a Brahmin, kill the Brahmin first", and "We will do with the Brahmins what Hitler did with the Jews". He spent some months in prison because of his open and systematic incitement to violence against "a particular community".

Naicker's successor as the recognized Dravidian leader, C. Annadurai, gave up the demand for a separate Dravidasthan after the Chinese invasion had made it clear that India could not afford such fragmentation. Or rather, he used the shock of the Chinese invasion as a pretext for abandoning a plank that was electorally unrewarding: Tamil separatism was repulsive even to most Tamils. Annadurai also watered down the anti-Hindu and anti-Brahminical stand of his mentor. He angered the Christian missionaries by thwarting their scheme of turning Kanyakumari into Kanya Maria ("Virgin Mary") and of putting a giant cross where the Vivekananda Rock Memorial was to come up. Already, Tamil Nadu was moving back into Hindu India. Nevertheless, the DK had set in motion an anti-Brahminical wave which was being translated into effective policies by the DK's offspring, the *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* (DMK) i.e., Tamil Forward Party, and the *All-India Anna* [= Annadurai] *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* (AIDMK).

For Tamil Brahmins, it became extremely difficult to get entrance into a college, or to find employment. Brahmins became the target of all kinds of pestering, e.g. Brahmin villages or neighbourhoods were refused a connection to the public water and electricity networks. Tamil Brahmins have fallen on very hard times. Many are doing odd jobs or find their daughters prostituting themselves; many have emigrated. Incidentally, these Tamil Brahmin emigrants include two of India's three Nobel Prize winners.

Recently, the anti-Hindu and anti-Brahmin thrust of the Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu has lost most of its force. After coming to power in 1991, AIADMK chief minister Mrs. Jayalalitha, herself Brahmin-born (V.T. Rajshekar only refers to her as "the Bangalore *papathi*"), worked to repair all the Hindu temples and put them back in proper use (with caste-neutral recruitment of priests). A newpaper reported: "Ms. Jayalalitha... has announced plans for the renovationof 15,000 of the 52,000 temples in the state and to revitalize temple worship at a cost of Rs.75 crore. Ms. Jayalalitha herself has contributed Rs.108 lakh to the temple renovation and maintenance fund."[63] She founded an institute for Vedic studies, where

[63] *Indian Express*, 30/1/1992.

the introduction of low-caste people to Sanskrit culture would receive special attention. Meanwhile, attempts by the DMK to re-profile itself by "going back to our roots", i.e. attacking Brahmins on the streets, received little popular support.

Brahmin people and Brahminical culture are neglected and attacked in other states as well. In March 1992, news came in that 28 Sanskrit teachers in Bihar had died of starvation because their salaries had not been paid. They had complained months before to the Brahmin Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, who took up the matter with the Bihar Government, with the result now known. Most of the teachers were Brahmins, though other castes had also acquired their share in the passing on of Sanskrit knowledge: one of the victims was an "untouchable" Paswan. One should imagine the hue and cry if this had happened to Urdu teachers (though I may add that Muslims look well after the guardians of their religion, and would not let them starve even if they didn't get their salary: indeed, it seems Hindus have no fellow-feeling especially when fellow Hindus are concerned).

The abolition of the compulsory Sanskrit course in secondary schools by the Rajiv government in 1988 also hit Brahmins hard in their traditional occupation par excellence. But more than against the still predominantly Brahmin teaching personnel, this decree was directed against Brahminical culture. It was a direct attack on the national sense of unity through Hindu culture, of which the Sanskrit tradition upheld for millennia by the Brahmins is the backbone. Muslim communalists like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad have always done what they could to oppose Sanskrit, even in silly details like the adoption of Western rather than Sanskrit numerals. Members of India's diplomatic corps have taken the anti-Sanskrit campaign to the international level: an Indian ambassador to Germany has actually pleaded for the abolition of ("outdated") Sanskrit chairs in German universities.

The mechanics of casteist politics was illustrated at the turn of 1993 by an anti-Brahminical gimmick of the Bihar Chief Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav. His vote bank consisted of Muslims and "Other Backward Castes", but two events in late 1992 caused cracks in this coalition. The demolition of the Babri structure in Ayodhya pitted the OBCs against the Muslims (in fact, friction between them had been surfacing before, most visibly in the Sitamarhi riots, where Yadavs firmly opposed Islamic aggression against their pro-

cession). Secondly, the Supreme Court ruling on the Mandal Commission report excluded the "creamy layer" of OBCs from the reservation benefits for OBCs; this creamy layer accounted for much of Laloo's caste-motivated support-base, and now saw itself excluded from the benefits that had constituted Laloo's promise to them.

So, Laloo put up yet another attack on the defenceless Brahmin community, illustrating the old scapegoat principle. He demanded that Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people replace Brahmins as temple priests and monastic abbots at once, and invited them to pick whichever job in the Hindu religious establishment they wanted. Now, it is only a dwindling minority in the Hindu religious establishment which opposes SC/ST participation; some of the foremost temples have been training SC/ST people for priestly functions since decades. The induction of SC/ST people in the priesthood is already taking place (though economically, it is not exactly progress for them, because temple priests' salaries are among the lowest in the country). Even an acceleration of this process could be negotiable: to Laloo's dismay, the BJP, targeted as a Hindu party, welcomed the suggestion.

But negotiations are not the way of the casteist hoodlum: instead of inviting the interested sections for serious talks, Laloo bluntly announced a take-over. Unfortunately for Laloo, the ceremony in which a number of Janata Dal SC leaders not otherwise known for religious inclinations crowned themselves as Shankaracharyas, was a big flop: invited worthies did not turn up, the public consisted of just some family members of the initiates, and the SC/ST leadership expressed its skepsis. But the whole operation did serve one good purpose: here was a casteist politician who confirmed that SC/ST people should be allowed to serve as Hindu priests *because they are Hindus.*

In his climbdown from his do-it-yourself Shankaracharya show, Laloo explained: "I am not against Brahmins as such. But more against forces of evil and moral corruption. that has gripped Brahminism over the centuries... My appeal is to find replacement to the time-worn Brahmin priesthood as none of the Vedas recommended that only the son of a Brahmin could perform priestly duties, nor did they ask the Brahmin to consider himself superior to other caste or ask him to create divisions in society."[64] He was appealing

[64] *Indian Express*, 31/1/1993.

for reform in the name of the Vedas: a welcome shift from his earlier announcement to "burn the objectionable parts of the Vedas and Shastras" (incidentally the type of gesture which he never would dare to make or even mention in the case of the Quran). Instead of blaming Hinduism itself, he has chosen to blame later accretions and corruptions.

While Indian politicians put bits and pieces of the anti-Brahmin and anti-Hindu programme into practice, the propaganda of the original drafters of this programme continues unabated. As we have shown in ch.4.3, vilification of Hindus in general, Brahmins in particular, is continued in missionary propaganda channels without any compunctions about the glaring contradiction with the rhetoric of "inter-religious dialogue". As ever-larger sections of the Indian political establishment have adopted the anti-Brahmin ideology, Church spokesmen find it easier to fortify their propaganda with "unsuspect" statements by non-Christian locals.

Thus, there is quite a bit of modern Indian literature that is out to mock or to blacken the Brahmin caste. Consider for instance Ananthamurthy's novel ***Samskara***, which describes the futile considerations in which a whole Brahmin village indulges when someone has died whose life story might or might not entitle him to the proper rituals of a Brahmin cremation. Typical modern (i.e. cynical) literature, but in the larger perspective, it is as misplaced as laughing at an old cripple.

One could write similar things about other communities. Recently a Muslim actress died and was refused burial in the Muslim graveyard because she had married a Hindu. When the Persian writer Firdausi died, the Muslims refused to bury him because he had eulogized pre-Islamic kings and culture; only when his son produced a forged will in which his father asked forgiveness for his un-Islamic writings was he allowed to be buried. The choice to mock Brahmins rather than Muslims, to attack an old and defenceless community rather than an aggressive and fanatical community, is significant for the author's bias or cowardice.[65]

The murder of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, a Chitpavan Brahmin, led to attacks on members of his community, and in

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[65] Another, truly grim example of anti-Brahmin ***Feindbild*** (enemy-image) creation is the Communist director Satyajit Rai's film ***Sadgati***, which tries to impress on the viewer the unspeakable heartlessness of Brahmins. It comes close to being the ***The Dirty Jew Suss*** (the Nazi propaganda film showing how despicable Jews are) of anti-Brahmanism.

some places to a new line of anti-Brahminism. In a recent article, an Indologist writes that Gandhi rejected the authority of Scriptures and of Brahmins, and that this may well be reason why "on 30 January 1948, Gandhi was killed by a member of the RSS, an 'orthodox' Fascist Hindu organization".[66] I leave it to the RSS to remind the public for the umpteenth time that Godse had actually left the RSS a decade earlier, but I do want to point out that neither the RSS nor the Hindu Mahasabha of which Godse was a member, can be described as "orthodox". Godse himself testified how he used to work for Harijan upliftment and inter-caste dining, and how annihilation of caste barriers had seemed essential to him for strengthening Hindu society. While one could argue, along with the Arya Samaj, that caste is against Vedic orthodoxy, the term "orthodox" is, in the Hindu context of recent centuries, certainly not used for Brahmins who violate caste taboos.

The Indologist writes that Gandhi's insistence on subjecting tradition to the test of reason should be generally acceptable, but: "What is harder to accept, is the statement that every interpretation must be subjective and personal, and that the traditional pandits, the theologians versed in Sanskrit grammar and Scripture are not the best guides to interpret a text! Only a person with a pure conscience can approach the true meaning of a text... With this, he wiped the authorities of tradition from the map, and signed his own death warrant." So, we are expected to believe that Gandhi was killed because of his opposition to Brahminical religious authority. We thought that during his trial, Godse had explained in full detail why he committed the murder (because to him, Gandhi was the "father of Pakistan"), and the dispute over orthodoxy does not figure in it at all. There is no reason to attribute hidden motives to Godse.

Moreover, Gandhi's opinion on Brahminism can best be reconstructed from his own writings. Aware of the anti-Brahmin agitation, he writes: "To the non-*brahmanas* I say: 'Seeing that you have got numbers on your side, seeing that you have got wealth on your side, what is it that you are worrying about? Resisting as you are, and as you must, untouchability, do not be guilty of creating a new untouchability in your midst. In your haste, in your blindness, in your anger against the *brahmanas*, you are trying to trample under

[66] Winand Callewaert: *Inforient* 11/1986, p.51.

foot the whole of the culture which you have inherited from ages past. With a stroke of the pen, maybe at the point of a sword, you are impatient to rid Hinduism of its bed-rock. Being dissatisfied and properly dissatisfied with the husk of Hinduism, you are in danger of losing even the kernel, life itself.'"[67]

In an article titled: "The Much-Maligned Brahmana", he writes: "I know of no system other than Hinduism under which a class has been set apart from generation to generation for the exclusive pursuit of divine knowledge and consigned to voluntary poverty. That *brahmanas* could not keep up the high standard that they had imposed upon themselves is no special fault of theirs. Their imperfection merely proves that they were as fallible as the rest of mankind, and so corruption crept into the so-called sacred books, and we have the spectacle of the most selfless rules governing *brahmanas* side by side with the selfish rules also made by them to help their breed. But it was the *brahmanas* who rose against the corruptions and selfish interpolations into the sacred texts... In spite of what is to me the sorrowful spectacle of *brahmanas* so-called making a frantic effort against the reform movement and lending their undoubted ability to the opposition, I am consoled, and let every unbiased Hindu be consoled, by the fact that the reform movement too is being led by those who are born brahmanas but who today take no pride in their birth. If a census was taken of all the workers against untouchability, I think it will be found that the majority of workers who are devoted to the cause without any remuneration or with only just enough to keep body and soul together are *brahmanas.* But I admit that *brahmanas* as a class have suffered degradation... Because Brahminism went down, it drew down with it all the other classes of Hindus, and I have not a shadow of doubt in my mind that, if Brahminism does not revive, Hinduism must perish, and for me the infallible test of the revival of Brahminism, that is Hinduism, is the root and branch removal of untouchability."[68]

Refuting a charge of anti-Brahminism, Gandhi said at Guruvayur: "I can only tell you that I cannot be held guilty of any such

[67] Speech at Cuddalore, published in *Young India* 22/9/1927, republished in M.K. Gandhi: *Hindu Dharma* (Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 1950), p.389.

[68] *Harijan*, 25/3/1933, republished in *op.cit.* p.390. Incidentally, one of the revivalist Brahmins "working without remuneration against untouchability" was Nathuram Godse.

design; for to me, to undermine Brahminism is to undermine Hinduism... No man can be accepted as a brahmana by society merely by reason of his birth. The shastras themselves say that a born brahmana who does not act according to the requirements of Brahmanism, will forfeit his right to be called a brahmana by people in general... I believe that the brahmana is the corner-stone of Hinduism, as of every religion. But there you must understand the meaning of the word brahmana. The brahmana is the person who has realized Brahma. If he has not that realization in every act of his, he shows that he is ever after it and nothing else. Such a brahmana demands my ten thousands prostrations every morning, but not the brahmana who is dictated to by self, who is multiplying himmself day after day and thinks mostly of himself... Now you understand what regard I have for the true brahmana and Brahmanism."[69]

When Brahmins complained that admission in schools or the services was getting more difficult for them because of the rising anti-Brahminism, Gandhiji's position was that they should not see themselves as yet another minority, that Indians were one nation in which there were to be no minorities and majorities (in those days, "minority" connoted special privileges), and that it was really a good thing to be relieved from the temptation of English colleges and government jobs. Finally, while nobody can claim those jobs as a "right", if at all one wanted to consider them as a right, the right belonged to those who "had hitherto been criminally neglected", meaning esp. the Harijans.[70]

From a certain angle, this is one of those cases where Gandhiji's advice amounted to little more than rationalizing passive acceptance of accomplished facts imposed by bullies. He seems to passively support the policy of positive discrimination, by calling on the Brahmins to take the moral high ground and see that the need of the Harijans is far greater than their own; which in itself is undoubtedly a correct position. At any rate, Gandhiji had no truck with the crude anti-Brahminism which Christian and secularist quarters have been promoting. Attempts to place him on their side of the divide and to claim that his violent death was a revenge for his supposed anti-Brahminism, are utterly false.

Missionary sources prefer to give the word to homegrown spokesman of anti-Brahminism like this somewhat naive "social

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[69] *Harijan*, 26/1/1934, republished in *op.cit.*, p.393.
[70] *Harijan*, 13/7/1947, republished in *op.cit.*, p.395.

worker" who gives vent to his grievances: "Sometimes I get so angry! If only all the people who have been kept small would take to the streets — imagine, 85%! — against the Brahmins..."[71] Yeah, they should have done that 3000 years ago. Would have saved them so much trouble.

In fact, the millennial persistence of the caste system with relatively very little upheaval, very little "taking to the streets" by "the people who have been kept small" to protest "against the Brahmins", constitutes a formidable anomaly in the extremely grim picture of Indian society which anti-Hindu propagandists have been painting. Anti-Brahminism today has the quantity of followers, both wolfish and sheepish, on its side. Whether it also has quality of arguments, has yet to be established.

4.8. Anti-Brahminism: the facts of the matter

The historical fact that there was never a revolution against "Brahmin tyranny" should be quite a problem for the anti-Brahmin propagandists. It weakens their case, and if they would be faced with any credible opposition (which they are not, thanks to their control over the media and to the intellectual slackness and confusion of the Hindu movements), they would find themselves at great pains to reconcile this fact with their extremely grim picture of that much-maligned Brahmin caste and its "tyranny".

To be sure, they have anticipated the argument to an extent by rewriting Indian religious history in terms of imaginary "social revolts against Brahminism". Nonetheless, the historical chapter of anti-Brahminism is usually confined to the Aryan Invasion theory as a basis for branding Brahmins as racists, some selected horror quotes from the Manu Smriti, and some general lies that "Buddha wanted to abolish caste" and that "low-caste people converted to Islam to escape the Brahminical tyranny". But the long-term perspective, even distorted, still shows a millennia-long social stability which even Islam could not destroy, and that is just not compatible with the picture of horrible tyranny sought to be conveyed. Therefore, the information on the caste system which they put to propagandistic use mainly pertains to the short-term perspective of the modern period.

The central contention of the anti-Brahmin propaganda con-

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[71] *Wereldwijd*, February 1991.

cerning the British and Nehruvian period is this: "Behind everything stands the Brahmin." My favourite mission paper reports: "In these states [North India], the caste system dominates everything and that means that most leadership positions are in the hands of the high castes, notably the Brahmins. Here are some figures. Of the total Indian population only 3.5% is Brahmin, but more than half of the top positions (top civil servants, judges, governors, ambassadors, etc.) is occupied by Brahmins. All the high castes together (altogether 15% of the population) turn out to have nearly all important public jobs divided among themselves."[72]

Some decades ago, similar figures could be cited for Jewish representation in many important and prestigious professions in Germany, Poland etc. (actually, Islamic papers occasionally publish such figures for the Jews in the United States today). Among doctors, lawyers, university professors, editors and financiers, the Jewish presence was extremely disproportionate. Even in the public sector of some countries, where anti-Semitic forces worked against them, they still managed to be remarkably "over-represented" (or more positively: great achievers). "Behind everything stands the Jew": that was the new secular formulation of the old religious aversion for the Jews. Along just the same lines, the religiously motivated anti-Brahminism of Christian and Islamic imperialists has found its new and secular formulation: social justice demands that we put this minority which has cunningly cornered all the top jobs back in its place.

But it is not just that the anti-Brahmin case is so similar to a highly tainted case of calls against "over-representation". The merits of the case by itself are not as impeccable as the impressive figures suggest. Let us briefly recapitulate the critique of the seemingly cast-iron case of Brahmin over-representation, formulated by Meenakshi Jain in the wake of the Mandal Report controversy.

In her article *The Plight of Brahmins*, Mrs. Jain writes: "Britishers of all pursuits, missionaries, administrators, orientalists,... were all agreed that, as custodians of the sacred tradition, Brahmins were the principal integrating force. This made them the natural target of those seeking to fragment, indeed atomize Indian society."

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[72] *ibid.* To my knowledge, the percentage of Brahmins in the population is slightly higher, and their presence in high office slightly lower; but exact figures from reliable sources are lacking. Caste-related policies like the Mandal plan are based on census figures of 1931; since then, caste is not registered.

Moreover, the Brahmins were in the forefront of the Freedom struggle. An observer is quoted who has calculated a different case of Brahmin over-representation: "If any community could claim credit for driving the British out of the country, it was the Brahmin community. Seventy percent of those who were felled by British bullets were Brahmins."

To counter the Brahmin challenge, "the British on the one hand launched a major ideological attack on the Brahmins, and on the other incited non-Brahmin caste Hindus to press for preferential treatment... Brahmins began to be protrayed as oppressors and tyrants who wilfully kept down the rest of the populace. Their role in the development of Indian society was deliberately slighted. In ancient times, for example, Brahmins played a major part in the spread of new methods of cultivation... But far more important was the Brahmin contribution to the integration of society. So influenced are we by the British view of our past that we completely ignore the fact that the principle by which the Brahmin achieved the integration of various tribes and communities was unique in world history... As a result of [British] machinations, non-Brahmins turned on the Brahmins with a ferocity that has few parallels in Indian history. This was all the more surprising in that for centuries Brahmins and non-Brahmins had been active partners and collaborators in the task of political and social management."

The census operations were another occasion for mischief with far-reaching consequences: "For example, H.H. Risley who directed the 1901 census operations was determined to demonstrate that 'race sentiment' formed the basis of the caste system and that social precedence was based on the scale of racial purity. The same race theory played havoc in Europe in the form of Nazism, and has now been fully repudiated. The British... sought to achieve standardization by placing all the jatis in the four varnas or in the categories of outcastes and aborigines. As a result they destroyed the flexibility that was so vital to the proper functioning of the system. The census operations raised caste consciousness to a feverish pitch, incited caste animosities and led to an all-round hardening of the system."

After independence, "the forces unleashed by the British continued to gather momentum. The myth of the omnipotent Brahmin has been so successfully sold that most Indians missed the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In recent years, however, a

number of studies have appeared that detail the downward mobility that has been the chief characteristic of the Brahmin community particularly since independence." Among the general factors contributing to this trend, the foremost is probably this: "Traditional occupations like family and temple priesthood, recitation of the Vedas and practice of Ayurvedic medicine no longer prove remunerative nor command respect."

Let's hear some figures: "A study of the Brahmin community in a district in Andhra (*Brahmins of India* by J. Radhakrishna, Chugh Publ.) reveals that all purohits today live below the poverty line. Eighty percent of those surveyed stated that their poverty and traditional style of dress and hair (tuft) had made them the butt of ridicule. Financial constraints coupled with the existing system of reservations for the 'backward classes' prevented them from providing secular education to their children... the largest percentage of Brahmins today are employed as clerks, followed by teachers. Over 15% are employed as domestic servants. The unemployment rate among them is as high as 75%." The study also found a decline in the number of Brahmin students and a higher drop-out rate from school, and that "55% of all Brahmins lived below a per capita income of Rs. 65 a month [= the then 'poverty line']... The percentage of destitute Brahmins is 10% higher than the all-India figures. There is no reason to believe that the condition of Brahmins in other parts of the country is different."

In fact, the figures for Karnataka are even more outspoken. Meenakshi Jain quotes "the per capita income of various communities as stated by the Karnataka Finance minister in the State Assembly on 1 July 1978: Christians Rs. 1,562; Vokkaligas Rs. 914; Muslims Rs. 794; Scheduled Castes Rs. 680; Scheduled Tribes Rs. 577; and Brahmins Rs. 537." Incidentally, this also explodes the carefully nurtured image of the Muslims as a poverty-stricken community and Christianity's self-advertisement as the religion of the poor fishermen.

Meenakshi Jain concludes this first article: "Clearly it is time to sit up and see reality as it is before we complete the task the British began — the atomization of India and the annihilation of Indian civilization."[73]

The conclusion may be a bit too grim. Injustice (intellectual as

[73] *Indian Express*, 18/9/1990.

well as political) against the Brahmins as a hereditary caste group need not mean the destruction of Brahminical culture. The ancient view, that whoever develops the skills and attitudes that make up a Brahmin, is *ipso facto* a Brahmin, is being re-actualized. The prevalent opinion among future-oriented Hindus certainly is that the Brahmin function is necessary for the preservation of Hindu culture, but that it must be disconnected from heredity. A new non-hereditary Brahmin class may stand up and become the backbone of Hindu civilization in the place of the Brahmin caste which the Muslims persecuted, the British and the missionaries blackened, and which the Nehruvian state is destroying.

But of course, in the present context this distinction between hereditary Brahminism (***brahmanavada***) and Brahminism as the quality of all who become guardians of Sanatana Dharma (***brahmanatva***), is largely theoretical: the attack on the Brahmin caste is (except in the case of the Arya Samaj) merely a part of a wider scheme to destroy Brahminical culture. Instead of educating the whole nation into Brahminhood (***brahmanatva***), as Swami Vivekananda had envisaged, the secularist establishment seeks to destroy all consciousness of the civilizational traditions which Brahmins had kept alive for millennia against heavy odds.

So, the Brahmins are declining in wealth and social status. To that, the anti-Brahminical campaigners may say: "But is that not a very good thing? There is only so much wealth and status, and if you want to give more to the Backwards, you have to take something away from the Brahmins. You say they are poor? Well, after all those centuries of shamelessly exploiting others, it may just be the right thing for them!" (this is almost literally what a *Wereldwijd* correspondent has said to me)

What was the level of wealth and status of the Brahmin in the centuries before Independence? To this subject, Meenakshi Jain has devoted another article, *A Myth the British Created*.[74] She argues that the numerical predominance of Brahmins in the administration and government is not the result of privileges, on the contrary.

If that seems a strange proposal, think of a scenario that has repeated itself in several colonial situations: a poor group of people is most receptive to Western education and soon finds itself ahead

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[74] *Indian Express*, 5/10/1990.

of the other groups in the colonial establishment. For instance, the Baluba in Belgian Congo were the victims of Arab slave-catching campaigns, and many of them had fled to the area of the Lulua tribe, where they were in the relatively inferior position of being mere refugees. When the Belgian missionaries introduced Western education to the natives, the proudest classes and tribes declined the invitation, but the unfortunate Baluba accepted it, and before anyone had fully realized it, they had bred a generation of Western-educated people who could take up certain roles in the colonial set-up, over and above their prouder fellow-countrymen. These Western-educated classes filled the lower levels of the administration, and after independence, they manned the higher levels: in India, Brahmins followed this pattern (while, to keep things in perspective, it must be added that Muslims took control of the Pakistani administration: in the subcontinent, it is not true that Muslims are under-represented in the civil service, on the contrary).

If in the 19th century the Brahmins took to Western education in a big way, it was not because they were privileged. Of course, as the teacher class, they had a way with studying and languages, and in that respect they did have an edge over other castes. This is not to repeat the worn-out lie that Brahmins kept knowledge and education to themselves: as British surveys found out, in the native schooling system, a large percentage of the pupils and a substantial percentage even of the teachers were "Backwards". But still, studying was more central to their caste traditions, and that gave them an intellectual advantage.

But what drove the Brahmins to seek English education and English employment, was their precarious material situation: "The decline in the financial status of their former patrons (the rajas and the zamindars) had deprived them of their traditional sources of subsistence. A Parsi observer in the Bombay Presidency noted in 1882: 'The wealthy classes... furnish but a small proportion of the students' because 'learning has been looked upon only as a means for obtaining a livelihood'. It was 'the struggling but respectable' classes that turned to Western education."

The material and social situation of the Brahmins in that period was merely an exacerbation of their traditional situation: respected but not rich. It was dishonourable for a Brahmin to become wealthy, and those Brahmin professions which did attract wealth, notably temple priesthood, or medicine, were of lesser standing

than the strictly ascetic branches of the Brahmin community.

Mrs. Jain cites figures of the income of the parents (or other garantors) of the pupils in an English college in 1885-95, and concludes that "37% of the 560 Chitpavan Brahmin garantors belonged to the low-income category, 39% fell in the medium-income bracket, and only 24% came from the high-income group. Similarly, of the 277 Deshastha Brahmin garantors 70% came from the low- and medium-income group."

Sir Alfred Croft, an education official in Bengal, wrote in 1881: "It seems not to be fully understood... how poor the middle classes that flock to our colleges really are. Half the students live from hand to mouth... And yet, though far behind in the point of wealth, they correspond to... our professional classes at home; and the pressure among them for the means of subsistence is so great, that they must either be educated or go to the wall." A British official wrote that in Dhaka the *bhadralok* "generally have a minute share in the landed estate, on which it would be impossible to support life. Hence they throng our high schools and gain a smattering of English, in the hope... of obtaining some government post."

Mrs. Jain concludes: "This should amply demonstrate that it was not a privileged aristocracy that took to Western education to establish or reinforce its traditional dominance, but an impoverished group in search of a livelihood." The rest of the article details why the British saw the Brahmins as a threat: they were the cultural backbone of the native society, and the militants and leaders of the Freedom movement were mostly Brahmins. That is why the British began to cultivate other communities. In 1881 already, the Bombay government decided to "secure due admixture of the various races and castes" in the administration, and planned a modest reservation policy in the colleges.

It is still fashionable in Left-secular circles to blame the British colonizers for many things, such as India's Hindu-Muslim conflict which is a millennium older than their arrival. We should not emulate this fashion, but there are cases where British rule has created or aggravated social problems, and where it has poisoned otherwise innocent social equations. Thus, the competition between castes has certainly acquired a vicious element as a result of the census and its penetrating re-definition of social roles and equations.

Another example is the role of the Bania, esp. the money-

lender. He has a very bad image, and it is said that after some time, he "ends up owning the entire place". Before the British period, the Bania was a part of the village economy, accountable to the village community. It is fair to allege he was selfish, as are most people; but the system was workable without requiring people to be angels, and managed to keep the effects of selfishness within limits (by contrast, recent utopian systems which expected people to work selflessly for the collective entreprise, have led to disaster). If a farmer could not pay his debt, the matter was settled by the village panchayat (which decided by consensus), which had to keep the interest of all parties concerned in mind and could not just expropriate the land of the offender. But in the colonial period, conflicts were settled by the British courts, which used capitalist concepts and mercilessly took the land away from a farmer who could not pay, giving it to the "aggrieved" money-lender, who thus effectively "ended up owning the entire place". Now this was not a Bania conspiracy, nor a diabolical British ploy, but simply the impersonal working of larger socio-economical forces, the unintended effect of an interaction which was intended as mere "modernization".

So also, the circumstances which made Brahmins enter the administration in a big way, were not a conspiracy. The leadership of Brahmins in the Freedom movement was partly the natural outcome of their traditional position, but also of their newly acquired standing in the colonial system. This naturally led to their leadership position after independence, a position which would just as naturally diminish as the circumstances which had caused it, were receding. These are natural social processes; we may find them too slow and desire to accelerate them, but that is no reason to describe the disproportionate presence of Brahmins in the administration as "Brahminical oppression", "worse than apartheid", "Brahminical ploy to control everything" and similar slogans.

In a third article, titled *Brahmins and Sanskritization*, Meenakshi Jain explains how "the concept of Sanskritization... has helped reinforce the British-created myth of Brahmin dominance at the apex of Indian society".[75]

Firstly, there is the obvious fact that Brahmins fulfil a number of social functions, so that they cannot constitute a single role

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[75] *Indian Express*, 17/10/1990.

model. Some are funeral priests (Kalatiya Brahmins of Gujarat, Mahabrahmins of Varanasi) and share to an extent in the "uncleanness" of the funeral personnel belonging to untouchable castes; others are teachers, temple priests, or practise more secular professions. It is not clear why others would want to imitate ways associated with these specific social functions.

Secondly, Brahmins are not a wealthy class. Today, the two most typical Brahmin professions, teaching and temple priesthood, are among the lowest-paid jobs in India. Temple-priests are literally starving. A newspaper reports that a majority of temple priests "earn just a pittance, not sufficient even for bare survival. It is not surprising therefore that the priests of Madhya Pradesh have threatened to take to begging. Priests from over 14,000 Hindu temples organized under the Pujari Mahasangh have announced their intention to swell the begging hordes of India. According to them, the temples were taken over by the Government when India became independent. Their salaries, including maintenance of temples, were fixed according to the prevalent living standards. The cost of living has increased 250 times since then, they say, but pujaris in free India draw an increment of only one paisa. Pujaris in Panna district in MP receive six paise a month. Pujaris in Malabar in Kerala are just a shade better off than the Panna priests. They receive Rs.6 a month... Priests no longer consider priesthood a vocation. The community is impoverished, backward, yet uneligible for help."[76] This is not a position which inspires others to imitation.

Even in the past, the Brahmins were not always in an enviable social position, even if their contribution to society was highly appreciated. According to Meenakshi Jain: "Brahmins, when they pursued their traditional calling as priests and purohits, merited little respect or even consideration. They were pathetic, helpless figures before the power and arrogance of the dominant groups. As such there was little question of them inspiring others to adopt their humble, spartan life-style. It was only when they acquired symbols of worldly power — land, money, armed might — that they became some sort of a power centre in the Indian social order. In South India, for example, Brahmins had direct control over land

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[76] Leela Menon: "Starving Temple Priests", *Indian Express*, 30/1/1992. The article further traces the problem to land confiscation (in the British period and by Nehruvian land reform acts) without compensation. The result: "Many temples in Kerala are turning into ruins, their previous wooden carvings and frescoes vandalized or eaten away by white ants. Many of them have ceased to be."

on a scale unrivalled in any other part of the subcontinent (the *brahmadeva* villages) and also managed the innumerable Vedic temples with substantial endowed villages attached to them. From at least the Pallava period onwards these lands became centres of advanced agriculture with impressive facilities for tank and canal irrigation."

That brings us back to the civilizing role of the Brahmins even in material matters like agriculture. Mrs. Jain quotes Burton Stein on the close relationship between Brahmins and cultivators as it anciently developed: "Surpassing all other relationships within the peasant society of this ancient period, however, was the close cooperation between Brahmins and respectable cultivating groups. Moreover, there can be no question that the relationship between Brahmins and dominant cultivators was entirely voluntary and recognized as mutually beneficiary." But there is a difference between a cordial relationship and a desire to imitate.

Alongside, there was the Brahmins' role in more literate forms of civilizing: "The temples themselves became the headquarters of devotional sects, religious learning and culture." Brahmins certainly enjoyed respect at least from those who valued culture and learning. But that did not make them rich. Those Brahmin professions that could earn considerable wealth, esp. temple priest (and funeral priest), were not held in high esteem among the Brahmins themselves. It is commonly asserted (and often fitted into the Aryan Invasion theory) that temple service was originally a non-Brahminical tradition, because temples and idol-worship have no place in the Vedic tradition; this would explain the lower status of the more profitable temple service for Brahmins.

If they were not rich, perhaps it was political power that made Brahmins enviable? This is a complex question. It is certainly true that Brahmins were often close to the rulers because they had a legitimizing role for those who wielded political power. And where Brahmins were not available, a king "did not hesitate to raise members of a lower ranking group to the status of Brahmins". This situation gave some Brahmins a place of honour in royal courts, as already in evidence in the Mahabharata.

However, Mrs. Jain reminds us that, in quantitative terms, this privilege of Brahmins was a marginal phenomenon, much over-represented in (naturally court-centred) literary sources: "But as M.N. Srinivas *[who launched the notion of "Sanskritization"]* has

said, at the local level, where the dominant castes held sway, Brahmins had no such legitimizing role to perform. The dominant castes were a power in their own right and were appointed to positions of authority (such as the village headmanship) by some superior political force (governor or king) in recognition of the power they wielded. So helpless were the Brahmins at the village level that short of total obedience 'the only sanction at their disposal was flight'. Many dominant castes, like the Jats of the Delhi region, were contemptuous of the Brahmins and even refused to eat food cooked by Brahmins who were not their domestic priests."

A related question is whether Brahminical treatises about social order and government were effective as codes of conduct and of law. Whenever Dalit activists quote from Manu Smriti that a Shudra who listens to Veda recitation must have molten lead poured into his ears, I ask them whether they have ever seen such an incident themselves, and if not, whether at least their grandfather had told them about witnessing it (pointing out that this injunction is *not* in the Manu Smriti might be considered pedantic)[77]. So far, I have not met anyone for whom this reference to Manu was more than bookish knowledge.

True, there are tales of atrocities on Harijans (not only by Rajputs and OBCs, but also by Muslims), but the reasons are conflict over land or wages and similar secular matters, rather than some abstract religious taboos from the Manu Smrti. But by sanctifying caste inequality, Manu has of course contributed to the contempt suffered by low-castes and the ease with which higher-caste people are willing to maltreat them. Manu has certainly moulded a mentality (or rather, has strengthened and codified an already existing mentality), but to what extent his vision had legal force is less clear.

From literary and epigraphical records, one gets the general impression that the actual point of reference in delivering judgment was not the Smritis, but "local custom". Until proof of the contrary, we can say that these Smritis were a theoretical view developed by a section of the Brahmins, elaborating existing caste practices ob-

[77] The line is nonetheless authentic, but is in Gautama Dharma Sutra 20:4-6. It prescribes pouring molten lead into the ear if the Shudra intentionally listens to Veda recitation, cutting his tongue if he recites it, splitting his body if he memorizes it. This type of discriminatory prescriptions in the Dharma Shastras is surveyed by Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar in ch.3 of his *Who Were the Shudras?*, republished in vol.7 of *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches*.

served by the general population, and containing a lot of rhetorical exaggeration and some cranky speculation.

Conceptually, Manu operated a not very convincing fusion of the practical notion of *jati* (the age-old endogamous groups or tribes) with the more theoretical notion of *varna* (the classes of the layered Arya society), explaining the existing *jatis* through genealogies from mixed-*varna* couples. This fusion of tribal *jatis* with feudal-type *varnas* must have strengthened and sanctified the sense of inequality between castes that had been separated by endogamy for long but had little sense of a hierarchical relation between them. Still it is widely agreed that the sense of hierarchy between the *jatis* was articulate only at the extremes of the social ladder: Brahmins on top (at least ritually, not economically or politically), Untouchables at the bottom, with plenty of grey area as well as social mobility in between.

Probably the Dharma Shastras were never closer to political effectiveness than in the British period, when a compendium of the existing law codes and various sources of customary law was prepared by Brahmins for the East India Company: the *Vivadarnavasetu*, published in 1776 in English as *A Code of Gentoo Law*. It was the British who gave the Brahmins this opportunity to put their stamp on legal practice to a larger extent than before. Even then, the East India Company jurisprudence did not order molten lead poured into anyone's ears for listening to Veda recitation.

The Manu Smriti contains more than caste discrimination, and deserves a less sloganeering evaluation than is now fashionable. To give an idea of what modern Indians have in mind when they mention the Manu Smriti, one J.G. Sharma, a secularized member of the ugly *brahmanavarna*, writes that by re-instating Manu Smriti as law (a status it never had), "a man could marry as many times as he liked, while the women would all be *suttee*", and "every time he would get a fat dowry"; in fact, neither *sati* nor dowry figure in the Manu Smriti.[78] Even when it mentions caste discrimination, it is not simply a matter of Brahmins "enjoying privileges": high rank comes together with the observance of strict rules and duties. That is why for some crimes the Brahmin or Kshatriya receives heavier punishment than the Shudra: "In a case where another, common man would be fined one 'scratch-penny', in that case, a king should be

[78] *Sunday Mail*, 14/2/1993.

fined a thousand; this is the established rule. For theft, the offence (and hence the fine) of a servant should be eight times (the value of the stolen object), of a commoner it is sixteen, and of a ruler thirty-two, but of a priest it is sixty-four, or a full hundred, or even twice sixty-four times, for he knows about virtues and vices."[79]

This is not to minimize the intense Brahmin-chauvinistic character of many other passages in the same book, and certainly not to endorse the view of a dwindling number of Hindus (once politically represented by Swami Karpatri's Ram Rajya Parishad) that the Manu Smriti should be "re"-instated as law, analogous to the Shariat in Pakistan. The Manu Smriti is the product of a human historical process, not some God-ordained eternally fixed order. Already in its own tradition, it is merely one of an array of similar writings. It explicitly acknowledges that it has been amended in accordance with the needs of the times, and thus subscribes to the general Hindu view that every epoch has its own *dharma*. Duty is dependent on "time, place and circumstance", and that counts as much for a law system as for subjective individual duty. Modern developments including notions of equal opportunity and equality before the law have really entered the mental horizon in India, and even a Hindu state will have to honour these principles.

4.9. Brahmin monopoly on education

It is commonly asserted by the missionaries, by their acolyte Jotirao Phule and his followers, and by secularist historiography, that the Brahmins had a monopoly on education. The reports on indigenous education made for the British authorities are still available to us, and give the first-hand data.[80] But these data do not confirm the received wisdom.

Ram Swarup summarizes some of the findings: "Education was free to all. The teachers as well as the scholars were derived from every class and caste. The data completely destroy the notion

[79] Manu Smriti 8:336-338 (the translation employed is Wendy Doniger's). It also criticizes Brahmins if they do not live up to the high standards set for their *varna*, if they "do not know the Vedic verses and merely live off their caste [status]" (12:114, similarly 2:103, 3:131-133, 3:168, 5:4).

[80] Dharampal: *The Beautiful Tree, Indigenous Indian Education in the Eighteenth Century* (Biblia Impex, Delhi); Joseph DiBona: *One Teacher, One School* (id.); G.W. Leitner: *History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab since Annexation and in 1882* (1883, reprinted by Languages Dpt., Patiala 1971); R.V. Parulekar: *A Source-Book of History of Education in the Bombay Province, Survey of Indigenous Education* (1820-30).

prevalent now that education was a monopoly of the Brahmins. Of the total number of scholars in the Madras Presidency, only 22% were Brahmin boys, 10.4% were Vaishya, while the Shudras and other castes constituted 60%. Muslims constituted a little above 7.2%, not in disproportion to their population... In the ten Tamil-speaking divisions of the Presidency, supposed to be the home of die-hard Brahminism, the upper castes consisting of Brahmins, Chettiars and Vaishya accounted for only 17% of the scholars; Shudras and other castes 76.6%; Muslims 6%."[81]

Shudras were not under-represented, and Brahmins only mildly over-represented relative to their percentage of the total population. In the Shudra category, however, we may differentiate between the middle castes and the lowest castes. It is true that the lowest castes were under-represented in schools. But they were not absent and excluded: in a survey of six districts in Bengal and Bihar in 1835-38, W. Adam found that the school population of 24,250 included 66 pupils of the Chandala and 84 of the Dom caste, just about the lowest in the caste hierarchy. True, this is only 0.3% each, certainly less than their share in the total population. But this was still better than in Europe in the same period, where garbage collectors' children were not well-represented in schools either. And it proves that at least some Chandala children could study along with upper-caste children, that some Brahmin teachers did share their knowledge with pupils from across caste borderlines. In the report, no mention is made of Chandala children being punished with molten lead in the ears.

On the contrary, of the 2,261 teachers in the districts, 32 belonged to the lowest castes, 6 of them to the Chandala caste (more than upper-caste Rajputs). Again, this is less than proportional, but it does prove that Untouchables could not only become students but even teachers. Mr. Adam also found that Brahmins made up only 9.6% of the teaching staff, as against 46% Kayasthas (a caste considered high but strictly belonging in the Shudra category).

W. Adam's findings also refute the missionary claim that the missions worked for the upliftment of the Untouchables by giving them better education than the Brahmins had allowed them. The Burdwan area had 13 mission schools, yet they had only 1 Chandala pupil, while the native schools had 60. The mission schools

[81] Review of *One Teacher, One School*, in *Times of India*, 29/1/1984.

had 3 Dom and no Mochi while the native schools had 58 and 16 respectively. Of the 760 pupils belonging to the lowest castes, "only 86 were found in the missionary schools, and the remaining number in native schools".

If we synthesize the results of the different reports available, we may estimate that in India as a whole, the Brahmin students constituted some 25% at the very most. This may be called over-representation, but it is nothing like a monopoly. The proportion is not more unreasonable than that which you would find anywhere in the world: children of people who specialize in education and scholarship are over-represented in the schools of every country when compared with children of manual labourers. The latter were by no means excluded from education, certainly not more than in England or other countries in the same period.

As for the subjects taught, these were more numerous and varied than what a child in Europe would study. Most importantly for this discussion, the sacred writings of Hinduism were taught to all the pupils, including those from low castes. The Collector of Bellary reported that "the three books which are most common in all the schools, and which are used indiscriminately by all the several castes, are the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagvata".[82] Ram Swarup comments: "Thus, contrary to the current notion, the highest ethical and spiritual literature of the Hindus was open to all, irrespective of their caste. Very much unlike the West, where the Bible remained unread and even a prohibited reading for many centuries."

It is only in the highest levels of the education system that Brahmins specialize in their traditional calling, Vedic studies, acquiring a near-monopoly, while some Shudra castes were over-represented in specialisations like medicine and astronomy. Among 806 astronomy students in Malabar, 705 belonged to non-*dwija* castes, or what we now call the "Backward Castes"; among 190 medical students, 159 were non-*dwija*.

The Brahminical approach to education, though by no means manned by Brahmins alone, is a remarkable instance of how Brahminism succeeded where Buddhism failed. In the ancient period, both traditions had big schools for advanced education, but the biggest and most famous were certainly the international Buddhist

[82] Quoted in Ram Swarup's review of Dharampal: *The Beautiful Tree*, in *Organiser* 28/10/1984.

universities like Nalanda and Takshashila, where monks were available full-time and in large concentration. Practically all big and high-profile institutions of Pagan learning were destroyed by the Islamic onslaught; after that, Buddhism simply disappeared, but Brahminism could fall back on its grass-roots network of education. The *gurukula* system, in which a teacher was a householder lodging a handful of pupils who took part in his family life, without needing any big infrastructure and organization, was resistant to the storm of Islamic persecution.

The Hindu education system which the British surveyors have described, may have been only a shadow of what it had been during the so-called "Hindu period", but it was still impressive enough. The small scale of the schools made a most individual approach possible, and techniques of learning were spontaneously developed which nowadays go by tall names like "interactive learning". This individualized education was, certainly at the primary level, much more efficient and economical than what the modern school system can offer. To the extent that they could fit it into their own system, British educationists adopted some techniques from it (e.g. having pupils monitor each other), and were especially inspired by its democratic reach. Lieutenant-general Walker wrote: "The system was borrowed from the Brahmins and brought to Europe. It has been made the foundation of national schools in every enlightened country. Some gratitude is due to a people from whom we have learnt to diffuse among the lower ranks of society instruction by one of the most unerring and economical methods which have ever been invented."[83] The common story of Brahmins jealously guarding their monopoly on learning is definitely based on something else than on these first-hand observations.

It is not for lack of merit that this traditional system of education disappeared: "There is no doubt that in former times, especially under the Hindu government, very large grants both in money and in land were issued for the support of learning", a British official had written.[84] "But", observes Ram Swarup, "all this changed with the advent of the British. Even before the inquiry into the indigenous education system was made, the land had been under the control of the British for quite some time. During this

[83] Quoted in Ram Swarup: review of J. DiBona: *One Teacher, One School*, in *Times of India*, 29/1/1984.

[84] Quoted in Ram Swarup: *One Teacher One School* review.

while... grants and other support to indigenous institutions were cut off altogether or curtailed drastically; lands and other assignments to the teachers were taken away. Under the new colonial dispensation, the disintegration of the old system was inevitable. It was accelerated by the missionary zeal of the new rulers... Those who were educated in the indigenous system were cut off from lucrative outlets. It caused a new division, a new value-system. Prestige attached to English and to what it stood for. Local culture lost prestige and power. The disastrous consequences are there for all to see."

The change from indigenous to English education was not merely a change, much less was it progress: for democratic education, it was a huge step backwards.

One cannot honestly maintain that the British schools in India were more democratic than the indigenous schools had been. Brahmin over-representation was more marked in the British period than before (for sociological reasons outlined above). Whether independence has democratized education, is a matter of debate: many poor and low-caste children do go to school, but the quality of these schools leaves much to be desired. Keeping these facts in mind, it is undeniable that the traditional Brahminical education was as democratic as was possible in the conditions of the time, and much more democratic than the contemporary alternatives that existed in the West.

4.10. Anti-Brahminism and anti-Semitism

There exists a striking parallel between anti-Brahminism and anti-Semitism, i.e. the systematic hostility towards the Jews which Christians and Muslims have been cultivating with the support of their theologians. The term anti-Semitism was coined only in the 19th century: in the context of the race theories boom, the Jews were no longer understood as a religious community, but as representatives of the "Semitic race". But the origins of anti-Semitism, or better anti-Judaism, lie further in the past.

The first signs of anti-Jewish animosity appeared in Egypt, where Jewish communities had settled since the Exile period (6th century BC). The hellenized population of Alexandria and of other cities in the Eastern Mediterranean did not like this community which boycotted the religious festivals and the sports contests, and claimed to be a Chosen People. Some riots against the Jewish

communities have been reported from that period and environment. In the Roman period, when political rebellion was brewing among the Jews, it was the impression of disloyalty which made the Jews the object of some mob attacks.

However, these anti-Jewish outbursts were nothing in frequency and intensity compared with the millennial story of Christian anti-Judaism. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern period, anti-Jewish violence has been a epidemic phenomenon in many Christian countries. During the Crusades, the campaigns against the Islamic unbelievers were accompanied by attacks on the "unbelievers in our very midst": these were the neighbouring Pagan nations, notably the Lithuanians and Latvians (who were attacked mercilessly by the Christian Crusader Order of the *Teutonic Knights*), and of course the Jews. The call to these and many other attacks on the Jews was given by priests. Some Christian dynasties, notably in Poland, Austria and Russia, carried out anti-Jewish policies.

To be sure, some Christian rulers and populations have shielded the Jews against Christian and non-Christian violence. When the Spanish Jews were forcibly converted by the Islamic Almohad dynasty, the Jews fled to the Christian kingdom of Leon, in Northern Spain. Jan Primus, the Duke of Brabant, rejected pleas to expel the Jews from his domains, if only for economic reasons. Thomas Aquinas, and Saint Augustine before him, had advised that the Jews be tolerated because they are living witnesses to the truth of the Old Testament, superseded by but nonetheless a presupposition of the New Testament. When the Catholic Kings of Spain forced the Jews to choose between conversion and exile, many were welcomed by the Calvinists in Holland. Not all Christians harboured a hatred against the Jews.

The basis of Christian anti-Judaism was the belief that the Jews had killed the Saviour, God's own son. The traitor-apostle known in Greek as Judas, who handed Jesus to his persecutors, had the same name as the eponymous forefather of (the most prominent tribe of) the Jews, Jacob's son Judah. Obviously, killing God is the worst crime imaginable.

However, there have been non-Christian varieties of systematic anti-Judaism as well. Islam, of course, has not forgiven the Jews for being skeptical about Mohammed's claims at prophethood. It has put the Jews in the *zimmi* status, along with the Christians (with

local differences: the Jews were better off in the Cordova Caliphate, the Christians were slightly better off in Syria). The Jews were tolerated, because they payed the *jizya* tax, which is why the Ottoman emperor allowed Jews into his empire after their banishment from Spain (they settled in Christian-dominated centres like Saloniki, Rhodos and Istambul, which still had a Christian majority). But like in Russia and other Christian countries, the Jews in North Africa and West Asia were subjected to many disabilities and frequent pogroms. After the decolonization, the Jews in Egypt, Tunesia etc. were immediately pushed back into their *zimmi* status, thrown out of the civil service, their shops boycotted; so that they had to flee to Israel. Zionism, as much as being the solution for the persecuted Jews of Europe, was the only way out for the Jews in the Muslim world.

Like in Christianity, the anti-Jewish (more than the anti-Christian) position of Islam has been a logical consequence of its fundamental belief system. According to Islam, Mohammed was announced as the final prophet in the Scriptures embodying the Jewish prophets' messages, but the Jews had gone as far as to censor and amend their Scriptures (i.e. the revealed Word of God) so as to conceal and deny the predictions on Mohammed. After "killing the Son of God", the Jews were accused of "tampering with God's Revelation".

A different kind of anti-Judaism was the secular anti-Judaism that became very strong after the *Haskala* (the "Jewish Enlightenment", 18th-19th century). Jews were becoming ever more prominent in public life, and with their culture of bookish knowledge, they made their mark on intellectual and scientific developments. This aroused suspicion against them from both the Right and the Left. Jews formed an international community, and therefore their loyalty to the nation-state was doubtful: French Rightists brought this view of the Jews to a climax in the Dreyfuss affair, involving a Jewish army officer convicted of treason but ultimately found innocent. Leftists, on the other hand, stereotyped the Jew as the capitalist par excellence. Karl Marx, himself of Jewish descent, has contributed a lot to this Leftist anti-Judaism. Stalin's last persecution campaign, fortunately aborted by his death, was directed against the Jews, or in Soviet code, the "rootless cosmopolitans". Today, this Leftist anti-Judaism comes mostly in the form of pro-Palestinianism.

Due to their exclusion from public life during the Middle Ages, the Jews had specialized in the professions (medicine, engineering) and in business: their over-representation among industrialists and bankers was not due to a conspiracy nor to privileges, but to a heritage of sheer necessity. Nevertheless, many hard-working Polish etc. commoners thrown into poverty by wily money-lenders (at least these, more than the bad harvest, could be blamed), found that these were often Jews, and saw their religious prejudice against the Jews reinforced by a perception of secular injustice. So, in the pamphlets of populist and Leftist agitators, the Jew became the arch-exploiter.

The intense anti-Judaism of the Nazi party is partly explained by a secular turn of events at the end of World War 1. The German soldiers were holding their own at the front in France and Belgium, and they could well have won the war if it had continued, but political forces at home, Social-Democrats and Communists, overthrew the government and signed a humiliating armistice. While chaos was mounting and Communist rebellions were taking place, the soldiers (including one Adolf Hitler) who were coming home were the object of mob attacks and vilification. It so happened that many of the Leftist politicians, who had "stabbed the army in the back", were indeed Jews. There had also been Jewish volunteers in the Kaiser's army, and even American Jews had collected money to support the German war effort; but these instances of Jewish political involvement were forgotten when the soldiers came home and confronted these Jewish Leftists. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is full of extrapolation of particular cases into general rules, and so these vocal Leftist Jews were seen as "the" Jews. Moreover, the Germans were reminded by precisely these Leftist agitators that the war had been started by the capitalists, the invisible hand controlling the visible political events of modern history; and these capitalists could again be identified as "Jews".

In this climate, it was easy to spread the story of a Jewish conspiracy, working through capitalists to start the war that would be so destructive for 4 European empires (including the Ottoman empire, which would lose Palestine and thus make way for a Jewish state), and through Communists to finish the job of destroying the German polity. While ostensibly enemies, capitalists and Communists were identified as merely the two hands of a single puppeteer manipulating the world: international Jewry.

This secular type of anti-Judaism would, however, never have become the force capable of organizing the Holocaust, if there had not been the centuries of Christian anti-Judaism. The ideological inspiration of anti-Judaism was thoroughly Christian. As preacher after anti-Semitic preacher kept repeating: the Jews have killed Jesus, who was God Incarnate. The Gospel tells the story, how the Jews had rejected Jesus, how they had collectively demanded the crucifixion of Jesus when the Roman governor Pilate offered them a choice between Jesus and Barabbas, and how they had shouted: "His blood may come over us and our children!" Pilate gave in to the Jews, in this matter which didn't much concern him personally, and against his own (and his wife's) inclination.

This way, the Jews are guilty of the most fundamental crime imaginable: killing God Incarnate. At least, if we assume that Jesus was really God Incarnate, and that the Gospel account of Jesus' crucifixion is truthful. The belief that Jesus was God Incarnate defines Christianity, and the belief that the Gospels are saying the truth is firmly assumed by all Christian denominations.

Let all those Christians (and, in the Indian context, their secularist allies) involved in polemics employing references to Nazism, remember Christianity's contribution to the Holocaust. In a recent book, Gerhard Czermak gives a survey of the Christian hatred of the Jews from the first century AD till our time.[85] One of his conclusions is that the "final solution of the Jewish problem" would have been impossible without the centuries of preparation by Christian clerics. Similarly, the Anglican theologian and historian James Parkes has concluded: "The Christian Church is responsible for the extermination of six million Jews."[86] In the *Lexikon der Religionen*, published by the Catholic publishing-house Herder, we read under *Judenfeindschaft* ("hostility towards the Jews"): "Without the nearly 2000 years of hostility against the Jews, 'Auschwitz' would not have been possible." The same position has been argued in ever more publications, e.g. by Friedrich Heer in his voluminous work with the telling title: *Gottes erste Liebe; 2000 Jahre Judentum und Christentum; Genesis des Österreichischen Katholiken Adolf Hitler* ("God's first love; 2000 years of Judaism and Christianity; genesis of the Austrian Catholic Adolf Hitler").

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[85] G. Czermak: *Christen gegen Juden*, Frankfurt am Main 1991.
[86] Quoted from J. Parkes: *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (Cleveland 1961), in J. Meerbosch: *op.cit.*, p.93.

While it is true that some Christians have physically and intellectually defended their Jewish fellow-men, it is equally true that even the modern varieties of anti-Judaism have been supported by Christian religious personnel. Consider some statements in a book on Judaism by a French priest: "1) Through capitalism, the Jews grab the riches of all the peoples. 2) With liberalism and socialism, the Jews, masters of the world's riches, poison all the nations, perverting their intelligence and corrupting their hearts. 3) Through Communism, the Jews exterminate their opponents and subject the Christians to an unbreakable slave yoke."[87]

It is the greedy missionary mind that has created the allegation of "deicide" against the Jews in order to better its prospects for conversions among the non-Jewish population. The Gospel editors may not have foreseen the ultimate consequences, but they should have known that if you sow hatred, you may well reap massacres.

In the Gospel story of Jesus' trial and crucifixion, we are puzzled by the seeming non-involvement of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. From reliable Roman sources, we know that Pilate was not the well-meaning and humane character presented by the Gospel. Governors were effectively allowed a reasonable quotum of plunder, but Pilate went much too far. His cruelty antagonized the population so much that Rome considered him a political liability, and called him back. Then why do the Gospels present him as a man of goodwill, who offers to free the most popular prisoner (Jesus or Barabbas), and only condemns Jesus to crucifixion when strongly pressured by the Jewish populace?

The reason is that the Christian missionaries wanted to demonstrate their pro-Roman and non-Jewish commitment. Especially after the Jewish rebellion of 70 AD, it was crucial for the survival and mass appeal of the young Church that the distance from the "disloyal" Jews be made as big as possible, and that any semblance of a Christian-Roman hostility be avoided. The Jews as the perceived enemies of the Empire had to be branded as also the mortal enemies of Christianity, starting with Christ himself.

In the anti-Brahmin propaganda, the contentions about the pejorative historical role of the Brahmins in codifying a hierarchical society are crucial, but the allegations concerning their contemporary status are more numerous. It is like with anti-Semitism: for the

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[87] Abbé Julio Meinvielle: *Le judaïsme dans le mystère de l'histoire*, Ed. Sainte Jeanne d'Arc, Vailly-sur-Sauldre 1936.

historical part, the fact that the Jews had killed Jesus was enough, but it was about the modern period that many telling "facts" were brought up to prove their contemporary, secular sins.

In the case of the Jews, the modern stereotype contained the following elements: their money-lending which keeps the "sons of the soil" poor, their conspiracy to take over the world, their mutual support and exchange of favours, their separate language spoken across state borders (formally Hebrew, popularly Yiddish), their bizarre ritual peculiarities, their funny dress habits and hang-ups about food, their book-orientedness and concomitant shrewdness and intellectual achievements.

Most elements of the Jewish stereotype can be transposed without any change: Brahmins too have their own language (Sanskrit), they are book-oriented and have remarkable intellectual achievements to their credit, they have peculiar dress habits and ritual idiosyncrasies, they have been influencing society in subtle ways rather than through formal power, they are wily and manipulative, and after a certain secularization they have cornered many positions in important sectors of modern society. Only the part about money-lending does not apply, but for that we can bring in the Banias, supposedly the closest allies of the Brahmins, and equally indulging in religiosity (doing *puja* for good business) and "superstitions" like vegetarianism.

Whatever the stereotype, the Brahmins were marked for vilification because they were an obstacle to the spread of Christianity. They had to be moved out of the way, and at least their influence had to be neutralized if the mission was to succeed in India. Like the Jews, they were initially denounced as obstinate refusers of Christ's message of Salvation, but come modernity, they were made the object of a more secular type of vilification, aimed at pitting the mass of ordinary people against them. An appeal was made to ordinary jealousy (Brahmins have cornered privileges), to xenophobia (Brahmins are Aryan foreigners), and to political paranoia (Brahmins are behind everything). Both the motive and the development of anti-Brahminism are indeed very similar to those of anti-Judaism.

4.11. Pagan and Biblical sources of Nazism

After 1945, Nazism has become a big propaganda item: the game consists in throwing the label "mother of Nazism" at your

opponents and trying to make it stick. If the Nazi propaganda minister Goebbels came back today, he would certainly devise campaigns to brand opponents as "the new Goebbels" and other Nazi labels. Thus, Christians have been accused by Marxists of not only collaboration with Nazism, but even of having prepared the ideological way for Nazism through their authoritarian-cum-mystical teachings which had moulded the European mind for centuries. Christians in turn are passing the buck to the Pagan and Oriental religions, which would have inspired the Nazis to their "un-Christian" policies. All the religions are blaming materialism, which is a basic condition for the Nazi idea of reducing men to their biological category or "race". Even the Jews have been blamed for Nazism, which is considered a modern and secularized version of the Biblical notion of the "Chosen People" with its right to take its "Promised Land" by genocide of its inhabitants.

In *Dalit Voice*, the explanation is simple: Brahminism, through the notion of "Aryan", is the mother of Nazism. Details of this process are given as follows: "We want to impress [on] our foreign comrades that the founders of Fascism like Nietzsche, Max Müller etc. have acknowledged that they borrowed their race theory from the sacred scriptures of the Aryan Brahmins. Hitler only implemented the Aryan race theory." Thus spoke V.T. Rajshekar, adding some sweeping condemnations of the British-German scholar Müller and the German-Swiss philosopher Nietzsche to his most sweeping allegations against the Brahmins.

Friedrich Nietzsche has been falsely claimed as a godfather of Nazism by the Nazis themselves. What they liked about him was his aversion for mediocrity and intellectualism, his revaluation of heroism. However, they systematically concealed other elements of Nietzsche's thought, such as his individualism and abhorrence of mass politics, and esp. his aversion of nationalism and anti-Judaism, which he considered vulgar; his marked influence on some of the pioneers of the Zionist movement is also a disturbing element for the common stereotype of Nietzsche. Nietzsche did share his contemporaries' sense of European superiority, but he valued French and Italian culture higher than German culture, which he found too emotional ("too much *beer* in it", was his diagnosis). Nietzsche's notion of the *Übermensch* ("superman") had nothing to do with German nationalism or with racism. The *Übermensch* is a goal towards which human life tends by surpassing itself: this con-

tinuous self-transcendence is quite the opposite of the complacent self-glorification of nationalists and racists.

As for Max Müller, if V.T. Rajshekar wants to paint him as a Nazi, he should keep in mind that Max Müller, unlike Nietzsche, was a devout Christian and a supporter of the missionary effort. His work on the Hindu scriptures was done with the explicit purpose of subverting Hinduism and clearing the way for the Christian mission (which does not exclude that his appreciation for Hindu culture was equally genuine: he was not a one-dimensional man). But that does not exclude complicity in the build-up of Nazism. However, in the case of Max Müller, it would be unfair to present him as the father of the 'Aryan race' theory.

It is Max Müller himself who has rejected the notion of "Aryan race", by declaring that "Aryan means language plus X". Admittedly, he was so outspoken about this view precisely because he had earlier helped in spreading the confusion about the "Aryan race". But he corrected himself and has a right to be judged on his mature rather than on his first view. Language may to an extent still be identified with cultural heritage, but to identify it with a race would be a flagrant denial of the observed facts of racial mixing and language transmission across racial boundaries.

A particularly important debate (or propaganda struggle) is that between Christians and Pagans over which should be considered the decisive source of Nazism's most inhuman characteristics: Paganism or the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Protestant theologians have been quite active on this front,[88] but the most interesting statement of their case is, in my opinion, the one formulated by the French-Jewish historian Léon Poliakov.

Poliakov has argued that the Bible contains a mytho-ideological basis for pan-humanism, transcending ethnic differences. The fact that it makes all people descendants of a common ancestor-couple, Adam and Eve, would set it apart from Pagan mytho-anthropology, which derives different nations from different ancestors (e.g. different totem-animals). Ideologically, the sin of Nazism could then be understood as a rejection of the Biblical heritage and

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[88] The first book in this category was perhaps *Edda en Thora*, by the Dutch theologian K.H. Miskotte (1939). It seeks to show that the attitude expressed in the Germanic poems of the *Edda* and the Biblical attitude are opposite, and that this opposition explains the contemporary situation in Germany, with Hitler as the arch-Pagan.

a return to pre-Judaeo-Christian ideas, which would give a common ancestor only to nations, but not to mankind.

A common ancestor ("blood") and a common habitat ("soil") would create solidarity within a tribe, and common hostility towards other tribes which did not share this common patrimonium: "Thus is explained the universality of references to a common ancestor, of the myths of origin, as also their function, which is to explicitate the obscure emotional forces which determine the hostility or alliance between clans and tribes. We may agree that under all kinds of ideological travesties, these forces are still active in our industrial society, and that it is these which the Nazis tried to capture when invoking 'the archaic intuitions of blood and soil'. In doing so, they wanted to reconnect with pre-Christian times, rejecting the belief in a common ancestry for all men, as affirmed in the Old Testament and in Christian anthropology."[89]

Much as I respect Poliakov's scholarship, I cannot share his view. For all we know, all the pre-Christian mythologies that could possibly have influenced the German intellectuals who gave a bit of Pagan colour to Hitler's secular and proletarian mass movement, do teach that mankind had a common ancestor. The Hindu "Aryans" made all mankind (*manushya* or *manava*) descend of *Manu*, the archetypal man. The Persian "Aryans" traced us all to *Yima* (the "first mortal", and in that sense also conceived as the guide of the dead: Sanskrit *Yama*). Germanic mythology traced all mankind to the giant *Ymir*, from whose sides the first man and the first woman emanated, to become our common ancestors. All these mythologies are "monogenist", i.e. they trace the origin of mankind to a single source. Contrary to what Poliakov states, none of the relevant mythologies is "polygenist", i.e. tracing the different sections of humanity to different sources.[90]

The Vedic notion of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, "the whole world is one family", has no counterpart in Nazi thought, nor in the Old Testament, which is a very human (often passionate and poetic, but certainly not universalist) and often ethnocentric document. Contrary to Poliakov's contention that "the Judaeo-Christian

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[89] L. Poliakov: *Le Mythe Aryen*, p.16.

[90] In modern genetics, this opposition still exists: against the monogenists who claim that the entire *Homo Sapiens* species is the progeny of a single African tribe (even a single woman, some say) which crossed the threshold from *Homo Erectus*, there are polygenists who claim that the step was taken independently by *Homo Erectus* tribes in different parts of the world.

tradition was anti-racist as well as anti-nationalist"[91], the Old Testament is not at all a rejection of divisiveness and nationalism: rather, it is one of the most elaborate statements of nationalism in history. Its view on nationalism is not homogeneous, e.g. the prophet Jonah's mission to the Assyrian capital Niniveh could be cited as articulating a supra-national dimension; but certainly the centrality and special status of the "Chosen People" are dominant.

For a kind of polygenism, we should look to the totemic religions: they entertain a belief that each tribe was the progeny of a particular totem animal, which usually gave its name to the tribe. For those who consider the "Aryan invaders" as Hitler's mother, it may be interesting to note that most scholars believe that "India's indigenous inhabitants" were totemists. Thus, Hanuman's tribe of "monkeys" is understood as an *adivasi* tribe that had the monkey as its totem; similarly, the Nagas or "snakes" were a tribe that had the snake for its totem. So, if we want to descend to the anti-Aryan movement's level of discourse, we may note that the presumed enemies of the "Aryans" were probably believers in the polygenism which Poliakov sees as the ultimate ideological basis of Nazism. But then again, maybe these monkeys, snakes and other totem animals ultimately had a common ancestor too.

Regardless of the actual contents of the Pagan mythologies, the explorations of a few romantic intellectuals in them could not have formed the basis of a mass appeal to racism and anti-Judaism anyway: the roots of these lay much closer by, in a mythology that was much more widespread in Europe. The Judaeo-Christian tradition itself, for all its tracing mankind to the single ancestor-couple Adam and Eve, has given a few motifs that have contributed immensely to the ideologies of racism and anti-Judaism.

Genealogy is quite prominent in the Bible. It is simply dishonest to present the Bible as the basis of the modern valuation of the individual regardless of his tribal adherence (what Christian-Democrats call 'personalism'). Time and again, God blesses or curses people, ***and with them their entire progeny.*** In the spirit of the time, this was even logical: success in life was measured by a prosperous progeny, so one was not truly blessed unless one's children got blessed as well, without any merit of their own. Conversely, since a prosperous progeny would considerably console even the

[91] L. Poliakov: *Le Mythe Aryen*, p.373.

worst-afflicted sinner, a punishment could only be hard enough if it also affected the sinner's descendents. Because of Adam and Eve's sin, all mankind is struck with mortality and suffering.

If you are a descendent of Caïn (Abel's brother and murderer), or of Ismael (Abraham's son by a slave-girl), you've got bad luck: you will have to wander in the desert. If you are a Canaanite, i.e. a descendent of Canaan, Noah's grandson through Ham, you have to bear the consequences of the curse which Noah spoke over Canaan: according to the Bible story, the Canaanites were exterminated to the last man, woman and child, when the Israelites took possession of their Promised Land. In a positive sense too, glorious vocations were dependent on ancestry. Certain priestly tasks were reserved for the descendents of Levi, and the Messiah would be a scion of the "house of David".

It is no wonder that the Bible was used to justify anti-black racism until very recently. Many Bible-rooted Christians in the southern states of the US and in South Africa have believed that the black race was the descendants of Ham, who had violated his father Noah's dignity, and whose son Canaan had been cursed. This curse was taken to apply to "Ham's children" in general, and indefinitely. According to the curse, Ham's son would be made to "serve" his brothers: a Biblical ground for keeping the blacks as slaves. The Dutch Reformed Church has repudiated this reading of the Bible only in the 1980s, and even then, a faction split off to preserve the racial Bible interpretation till today.

The Aryan-Semitic divide is also based on the Bible. In most early writings on the "Aryan race", the Indo-European-speaking peoples were not yet called "Aryans", but "Japhetites", the descendents of Noah's third son Japhet. Poliakov himself relates this episode of intellectual history in unprecedented detail. The different Europeans nations were given the sons and grandsons of Japhet as national ancestor. The Japhetites were conceived as the warrior race, the Semites as the priestly race, and the Hamites as the servile race. Though they had a common father, these three monogenist brothers (and with them their descendents) were by no means equal.

We must conclude that there is no substance is Mr. Poliakov's position that Pagan polygenist mythologies have been the basis of racism and Nazism. Nevertheless, his intellectual exercise has some value. While mythological monogenism or polygenism will at most

affect the outlook and behaviour of primitive people for whom mythology still constitutes the intellectual horizon (i.e. people who are by far not at a stage of social development where "fascism" could emerge), there is certainly a more modern form of polygenism which does foster racism.

Historical polygenism is what we could call the doctrine that there are different mankinds descended of different ancestors, not in the mythological but in the historical past. It is precisely this historical polygenism which certain Dalit ideologues are presently fostering. They teach that the upper castes descend from the Aryan invaders, the lower castes from the Indus Valley population, and that because of this separate ancestry, the two are enemies: that is a modern form of polygenist racism.

Polygenism is not the only way to divide mankind. The most important divider of mankind into fully human and inferior beings, is Prophetic Monotheism. Both Christianity and Islam divide mankind in saved believers and doomed unbelievers. In Islam, this doctrine has been amply formulated in the basic scripture, Quran and Hadis: unbelievers can be killed and enslaved, while believers are entitled to privileges and to solidarity from their co-religionists. The Quran itself says: "Mohammed is Allah's Prophet. Those who follow him are harsh to the unbelievers but merciful to one another." (48:29)

In the Old Testament too, the sharp division between the Chosen People and "the nations" (*goyim*) is prescribed by God Himself, and fraught with dire consequences for the nations who stand in the way of God's designs for His Chosen People: the Midianites, Edomites, Canaanites and Philistines are massacred at God's command. The New Testament is not that explicit, and Christians may argue that similar cruelties by Christians against unbelievers are mere "historical accretions" which constitute a "betrayal of the original spirit of Christianity". At any rate, the European population which was receptive to Nazism, had a millennium-old heritage of Christianity.

Anti-Judaism, Nazism's most outspoken programme, resulting in genocide, was directly inherited from Christianity. It cannot possibly be blamed on the marginal neo-Pagan vogue in modern Germany. The composer Richard Wagner can be cited as someone who glorified the Pagan past (as he imagined it) and at the same time cherished anti-Semitic opinions. But that does not reduce the

latter to a consequence of the former; moreover, Nietzsche broke with Wagner precisely because Wagner was reverting to Christianity, and because of his proportionately growing vulgar nationalism annexing anti-Judaism.

In Germanic and Celtic (and Iranian and Indian) Paganism, anti-Semitism never had a place. It never would have made sense, except in the Christian framework which assigned to the Jews the guilt of murdering the Saviour (and secondarily in Islamic theology, which blames the Jews for falsifying Scripture and editing out all predictions of the final prophet Mohammed).

Sociologically, Nazism was very much a modern phenomenon. Further, it was fascinated with the power of modern technology. But it also had an anti-modern, anti-rational component. While not saying that this can be traced to a Christian model, it certainly had recent Christian parallels. The First Vatican Council (1870) was the Catholic Church's reaction to modernity. Rather than buckling under the rationalist critiques of irrational Christian dogma, it decided to go head-on against the modern spirit by accepting some dogmas sharply offensive to reason. Thus, the Virgin Mary was extolled as the "Queen of Heaven", born immaculate, impregnated by the Holy Spirit, and taken bodily from this world into Heaven. The pope was declared infallible: this is the Catholic version of the *leader principle*. Shortly after the Council, the Church would also develop the alternative strategy of "showing the fundamental harmony between the findings of modern science and the Teachings of the Church", but the anti-rational character of some of the Council's decisions is undeniable.

Earlier in the 19th century, the reactionary Catholic thinker Joseph de Maistre had been a precursor of the grim anti-modern, anti-libertarian views of 20th-century totalitarianism, precisely by linking up with the past of Christian terror and total control, e.g. justifying the horrors of the Inquisition at a time when even the Church was becoming apologetic about that part of its history.[92]

The authoritarian approach of Nazism was, again, not a revival of Pagan custom. The ancient Germanic tribes had their tribal councils (cfr. the Indian *sabha* and *samiti*), and the king had to respect local autonomies. By contrast, the Catholic Church (less so the Protestant Churches) is a centralized and authoritarian struc-

[92] See the three-part article by Isaiah Berlin: "Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism", in *New York Review*, 27/9, 11/10, 25/10/1990.

ture. In politics, the Churches had been supporters of Royal Absolutism, e.g. the Catholic Church for Louis XIV in France, the Anglican Church for Henry VIII in England. In the 19th century, the Church had spoken out against 'liberalism', i.e. against equality, liberty, secularism and religious pluralism, and it supported the Restoration. While Christians objected to some points of Nazi doctrine, e.g. the "idolatry of the national state", many did feel fairly well at home in the Nazi system.

Contrary to Christian propaganda, the Nazi party was not a Pagan party. Article 24 of the Nazis' party programme read: "...The party as such takes the position of a positive Christianity, without tying itself to any one denomination. It fights against the Jewish-materialist spirit outside and within ourselves, and is convinced that a durable cure for our nation can only succeed on the basis of 'Common interest before private interest'."[93] Many Christians could readily agree with that.

Hitler himself is known to have considered Jesus a miserable masochist, who should have fought back rather than submit to crucifixion. It is true that Hitler rejected the morbid Christian cult of sinfulness and guilt, and the Christian extolment of meekness and submissiveness. But to the extent that Christianity had moulded the German identity through the First Empire ("Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation"), and to the extent that Christianity had motivated German imperialism through the Teutonic Knights, Hitler was all for Christianity. It is well-known that Hitler paid his Church tax (since Bismarck, Churches in Germany are subsidized from taxes levied on those who declare themselves as member of the Church concerned) for the Catholic Church until his status as Reichsführer made him tax-exempt. In Hitler's homeland Austria, the Catholic Church was openly anti-Semitic, and the official view of the Roman Catholic Church (renounced only in 1962) was that the Jews were the murderers of Christ; Hitler saw no reason to leave the Church on that account.

As a child, Hitler had been a singer in a church choir, but by age sixteen, he had ceased going to church. Nevertheless, the effect of his Christian upbringing was profound and remained in evidence in the subsequent decades, even after he had become a conscious anticlericalist (or what Indians call "secularist"). The

[93] Quoted in Janus Meerbosch: "Het Protestantisme anno 1933 in het Derde Rijk", in *Teksten Kommentaren en Studies*, 1/1992, p.90-93.

historian P.F.M. Fontaine reports: "Long after that, he retained a link with Jesus Christ... When in 1919 he had become a deliberate anti-Semitist, this became a problem. Jesus was, after all, a son of the Jewish people? The solution was staggeringly simple. In Hitler's view, Jesus was not a Jew but an Aryan.[94] This enabled him to intensify his connection with Jesus up to a point where identification starts... At a Christmas celebration of a Nazi chapter in Munchen, anno 1928, Hitler said that he 'wanted to turn the ideals of Christ into action. The work which Christ had begun but not completed, he would bring to completion.' People were even welcome o 'crucify him if they thought he had not done his duty'. Indeed, at this Christmas celebration he even said that 'Christ had been the greatest fighter against the Jewish world enemy'. This enabled him to say, one evening in 1938 during a talk in the Reich chancellory: 'In the Gospels the Jews shouted to Pilate: His blood may come over us and our childern. Perhaps it is up to me to fulfil this curse.' Only very slowly did he say goodbye to Christianity."[95]

But did he really say goodbye? In 1937 he said that he had, "after an intense internal struggle, freed myself of the lingering religios constructions of my childhood. I now feel as fresh as a young foal on the meadow."[96] But his main religious enthusiasm at that time concerned Parsifal, the Knight of the Holy Grail whose story was the theme of Richard Wagner's last opera.[97] "From *Parsifal*, I am building myself a religion", he said in 1936.

Now, the narrative cycle of the Holy Grail had a Pagan (esp. Gnostic) component, but was mostly an expression of Christian mysteries. It is about Monsalvat, the Mountain of Salvation, about the spear which had pierced Jesus on the cross, about the chalice (the Grail) in which Jesus' blood had been collected (after having been used at the Last Supper); about Parsifal's endeavour to bring salvation to king Amfortas who is an invalid after succumbing to the witch Kundry's temptation (like Jesus saving man/Adam who is mortal ever since eating Eve's apple); and about Parsifal's crusade against the Pagan king Klingsor, who is defeated by the sign of the

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[94] When in May 1939, Hitler was in Rome, Mussolini showed him a sculputre of Jesus at an exhibition, according to him the oldest extant depiction [of Jesus]. Adolf Hitler thought that this was the authentic Jesus and said that this depiction proved that Jesus was not a Semite.

[95] P.F.M. Fontaine: *De Onbekende Hitler*, p. 236-37.

[96] Quoted *ibid.*

[97] Quoted *ibid.* Incidentally, the opera's première in 1882 was conducted by a Jew.

cross. When Parsifal shows the Grail to the assembled knights, a dove descends from heaven, like it did when Jesus rose from the river Jordan after his baptism.

Fontaine writes: "I think that the many Christian elements in the story have also attracted him. Bread and wine, water and blood play an important role, as does the chalice of the Last Supper. There was also the baptism of Kundry and Parsifal's religious enthronement. The most characteristic element is of course the Eucharist celebration in the great hall of Monsalvat... Even more important is that he [Parsifal] assumes more and more the traits of the Messiah..."[98]

But more than for those reasons, Hitler identified with Parsifal because of Parsifal's supposed concern for pure blood, "the contrast between the pure blood of the pure-hearted fool Parsifal and the vitiated blood of Amfortas. He himself saw it and feared it as such. It was, he thought, 'the fundamental subject of the drama. Nothing Christian, no, but the pure, noble blood; to preserve this in its purity, the brotherhood of the knowing ones assembles. The king suffers of the incurable disease of the impure blood. The ignorant but pure human being is tempted to indulge in the lust and intoxication of a vitiated culture in Klingsor's garden, or to join the choice of knights who preserve the secret of life, the pure blood. We all suffer of the disease of the impure, mixed blood. How can we purify and reconciliate it?' "[99] Hitler applied the notion of Original Sin to the impurity of blood, esp. his own suspected partially Jewish ancestry.

Moreover, the very image he uses to indicate racial purity or impurity, its suppoed physical carrier, is obviously borrowed from Christian imagery: blood. Parsifal is the knight of the pure blood, because he is the knight of the Grail, the chalice containing Jesus' blood. Hitler's cult of "blood" as the medium of racial purity, though obviously containing a materialistic-vitalistic component, cannot be fully disconnected from Christianity's morbid cult of the bleeding crucified Christ.

Contrary to what some pop books have been claiming, the Nazi Party was not very fond of neo-Pagan ideas.[100] Membership of

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[98] *ibid.*, p. 239.
[99] *ibid.*, p. 241
[100] The weirdest story on the "occult" views and motives of the Nazis is in Louis Pauwels & Jacques Bergier: *Dawn of the Magicians* (English translation, London 1971). Similarly, Werner Gerson: *Le Nazisme, Société Secrète* (Paris 1969). Slightly more reliable is Nigel Pennick: *Hitler's Secret Sciences* (Neville Spearman, Suffolk 1981).

an 'Odinist' (after Odin/Wodan, a Germanic god) organization implied automatic exclusion from the Nazi Party. There is a story (briefly sold to the British authorities by the Hungarian charlatan Louis de Wohl) that Hitler employed astrologers. In fact, even the 1923 prediction by an astrologer that Hitler would save Germany, didn't diminish Hitler's skepticism about this inexact science. After the Swiss astrologer Karl E. Krafft had accurately predicted an attempt on Hitler's life, all known astrologers were rounded up. And again, when Rudolf Hess, who did have mystical leanings, made his absurd trip to England, Hitler had all clairvoyants and astrologers arrested; Goebbels sneered that it was poor advertisement for their skills that they had not even foreseen their own arrest. Krafft and many of his colleagues died in concentration camps.

One of the few thinkers in the Axis ruling elites to be fairly erudite in the authentic Pagan and Oriental doctrines, was the Italian author Julius Evola; like Wagner, he combined a (less superficial) fondness of Pagan traditions with an outspoken anti-Semitism (he wrote an introduction to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the anti-Semitic forgery). But he was disliked and sidelined by the leaders of Mussolini's Fascist regime: he was too intellectual and independent, and they were not interested in Tradition and spiritual dimensions anyway.

Essentially, both Fascism and Nazism were secular national-imperialist movements (if secularists trouble you with one of their contrived Hitler comparisons, you can remind them that "Hitler was a secularist"). Their link with Christianity was profound but (except for the Jewish question) largely subconscious, and operated (like in Marxism) through secularized versions of Biblical notions: the Chosen People, God's Millennial Kingdom on Earth. On the other hand, their link with Paganism was superficial and sometimes just comical.

The "Pagan" ideas attributed to Karl Haushofer, Rudolf Hess and Heinrich Himmler had little to do with traditional Paganism, be it European or Oriental, but owed a lot to their own fantasy and to the weird occultist societies that had proliferated in Europe in the 19th century, notably the Theosophical Society which had given them some totally distorted ideas from "esoteric Buddhism" (whence some Nazi thinkers' fascination with Tibet) mixed with "esoteric Christianity". The Theosophists, as well as their German splinter, the Anthroposophists led by Rudolf Steiner, had an etheric

understanding of world history ("revealed by the *Akasha Chronicle*"), in which the "Root Races" took turns at dominating the world; in the modern age, it was the turn of the "Aryan Root Race". These weird schools did not have Auschwitz in mind, but they amplified the existing respectibility to the notion that race is the secret key to understanding world history. The point is that these notions could not be traced to authentic Pagan doctrines, but strictly to modern, quasi-scientific notions.

The German Anthroposophical movement claims (and it would be interesting to find out since when it claims this) that the fire which sometime in the 1920s destroyed its original headquarters, the wooden *Goetheanum*, was lit by the Nazis, "because the Nazi black magicians had to get the force of white magic, embodied in the Goetheanum, out of the way before they could embark on their programme of evil".

Nazi Paganism introduced the mysticism of *blood* (being at the same time the supposed bearer of heredity and the sign of war), and tried to force ancient themes into this new doctrine. The *Ahnenerbe*, "ancestral heritage", the historical research department of the SS (*Schutzstaffel*, "Protection squadron"), did organize research into ancient Pagan traditions (some of it quite good but too tainted for reference by later scholars), but had to distort its findings in order to fit the ideological requirements of the new Nazi ideology. The most famous example of this distortion is of course the swastika: the Nazis wrongly assumed that it was a symbol used exclusively by the "Aryan" peoples (in fact it has been attested among many divergent cultures), and that it had a magical power linked with racial purity.

Christian history furnished two important precedents to the most sinister wing of the Nazi movement, the SS. One was the *Vehmgericht*, the "secret tribunal", a secret society set up to execute left-over practitioners of Paganism in medieval Germany, which inspired the SS both in its methods and in its symbols. The second was the *Order of the Teutonic Knights*, which, after coming back from Palestine, had continued the Crusade, now against the Pagans of Latvia and Lithuania, the last stronghold of European tradition against Christianity (true "Aryans" should rather have sympathized with these guardians of Indo-European culture). The Teutonic Knights were the historical model for the Freikorps, a German volunteer army brought in to fight the Bolsheviks in Latvia in 1919, but

which subsequently started plundering the Latvian cities, and had to be defeated by the joint Latvian and Lithuanian forces. The Freikorps men were sent back to Germany and many would join the emerging Nazi movement.

The Baltic *Freikorps* was the first tributary to the Nazi movement which used the *swastika* as its emblem. What is less well-known is that the swastika had been used in the preceding years by equally divergent organizations in the modern West, both in clockwise and counter-clockwise version. Even the British saving stamps in the World War I and the aircraft of the American *Escadrille Lafayette* in the same war carried the swastika. At any rate, there is nothing intrinsically Aryan, nor anything intrinsically Nazi, about this age-old symbol.

Briefly, the whole propaganda exercise to paint Nazism as a revival and as the ultimate expression of pre-Christian religion is false. Nazism was a secular movement, partly based on post-Christian materialist notions of biological or racial determination, partly drawing upon the Christian tradition of anti-Judaism.

4.12 Nazi collaborators

There exists a report on the RSS written at the initiative of the Indian Catholic Bishops' Conference by three Church dignitaries, which has so far only circulated internally, but may soon be published.[101] In it, "parallels" between the RSS and the Nazis are drawn in several places: nationalism, glorification of the national past, mass drills, uniforms. This attempt to label the RSS as "Fascist" is not very convincing to the informed reader. I have my own criticisms of the RSS, but, assuming I can recognize a Fascist when I see one, I must say that in my interviews with RSS-affiliated leaders, I have not yet met one Fascist.

A missionary connected with this report has told me that there is information in recently released British archives, that the RSS has approached (or been approached by) the Germans for collaboration. To be sure, the Germans supported ex-Congress leader Subhash Chandra Bose, whose collaboration with the Axis powers made him more popular than Jawaharlal Nehru, who preferred to collaborate with Stalin and therefore also with his British allies,

[101] The copy I have does not carry a title, nor any author's name. I have agreed not to divulge any names connected with it. Several Delhi publishers have been approached for publication.

India's actual occupiers. Subhash Bose is still a respected figure honoured at state functions, which proves that the Indian people can make a distinction between ideological assent to the Axis powers' programme, and a tactical alliance in what was sincerely perceived as the national interest (Subhash Bose was actually a leftist, who believed in socialist dictatorship and who sought Soviet help after the Axis defeat). Even if the RSS had collaborated, that would only put it in the same position as Subhash Bose, or as the Indonesian freedom fighters, who took over their country from the Japanese without minding the allegations of "collaboration with the Axis" which their Dutch ex-masters threw at them.

The evidence claimed against the RSS cannot be much, at any rate never be as bad as the overwhelming evidence of Christians collaborating with Nazis and Fascists. Considering their own record, the effrontery of Christians trying to brand non-involved Hindus as collaborators with a regime supported by many Christian individuals and institutions, is highly misplaced. The bishops are not in a position to lecture others about this category of historical crimes. But let us not bother about the case against the RSS: in ostensibly attacking the RSS, the Church is in fact attacking Hinduism. Indeed, with the help of people like V.T. Rajshekar, it tries to brand Hinduism itself as somehow intrinsically Fascist, racist etc.

In doing so, the Christians are taking a page from the Communists' book of dirty tricks: in Communist publications, even such moral authorities as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and the Dalai Lama have been branded "fascists". The Hindus are in good company, and the task before them may well be just the same as the one which Solzhenitsyn and the Dalai Lama have taken up: rebuilding the nation on the basis of its own religious traditions.

Some Hindu-baiters have been saying that, in his day, Hitler was very popular among the Hindus. Maybe so. What most people in India knew of Hitler, was that he had adopted the *swastika* in his flag, that he was a vegetarian, and that he was a formidable threat to the British. None of these things is objectionable, and if they aroused sympathy, that should not bring any stigma with it. That Hitler had a programme of anti-Semitism was hardly known and much less understood in a country that had never discriminated against its Jewish minority. That Hitler was painted in the blackest colours in the English press, was understandably taken to be mere war propaganda.

Many people in what was to become the "third world" were enthusiastic about Hitler and Mussolini. Argentinian leader Juan Peron would even retain a measure of loyalty after Hitler's defeat, so that he provided asylum to many ex-Nazis. Young Fidel Castro would imitate Mussolini in front of the mirror. The secularist Baath Party in Syria and Iraq was modelled on Mussolini's Fascist Party. The Iranian Shah Reza Pahlevi was an open admirer of Hitler (for which he was forced by the British to abdicate in favour of his son).

The Muslims in particular were enthusiastic. In Eastern Europe, Muslim nations rallied to ally with Hitler: the Bosnian Muslims, the Kalmuks, the Chechen and Ingoosh, the Balkars, the Meshkets, and the Krim Tatars. In West Asia, prominent leaders like the Druze leader Shakib Arslan (Walid Jumblatt's father) and the Mufti of Jerusalem allied themselves with Hitler. Franco conquered Spain with the help of Moroccan troops; he would continue a pro-Arab policy afterwards. In India, the Muslim League repeatedly invoked Hitler's strong-arm tactics as an example and as a threat to the Hindus. Iqbal wrote a eulogy for Mussolini, and the Khaksar movement was founded on the Nazi model by Allama Mashriqi who had come back from Germany full of enthusiasm for Hitler. After the war, Nazi war criminals were given asylum in Syria and other Arab countries. Saudi Arabia has financed many negationist (Holocaust-denying) publications, and, like Iran, it helps spreading the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and other anti-Jewish propaganda material, sometimes including Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

But the one religion most intricately implicated in the Nazi and Fascist march to power, was certainly Christianity. Apart from possible profound ideological affinities between Nazism and Prophetic Monotheism in general, Christianity in particular, there is also the fact of Christian collaboration with the Nazi and Fascist regimes. Mussolini concluded a Concordat with the Catholic Church, granting it a privileged position. Germany made a similar agreement with the Churches. Franco's Spain and Salazar's Portugal were practically Catholic theocracies. In Germany, it was the Protestants who collaborated most eagerly, though the Catholic Austrians had massively applauded the annexation of their country to Nazi Germany. Prominent theologians, such as Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emmanuel Hirsch, chose to furnish theological bricks for the edifice of Nazi ideology.[102]

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[102] Their story is told in Robert P. Ericksen: *Theologians under Hitler* (Yale University Press, 1985).

The Dutch theologian Wilken Veen has thoroughly researched this episode and concluded that in 1933 the Protestant Churches in Germany "embraced" National-Socialism.[103] Part of their motivation was fear of Communism and of the anarchy that had characterized the Weimar republic. On 20 April, Hitler's birthday, the Churches hoisted flags, with only a few dissenting voices (Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhöffer). Their own founding-father Martin Luther had been an articulate anti-Semite, and he was celebrated in a big way in 1933. The bishops kept silent about the anti-Jewish policies promulgated by the new government, and did not protest against the boycot of Jewish businesses on 1 April, nor against the pensioning off of all "non-Aryan" civil servants on 7 April. The Rev. Otto Dibelius said that "this is merely a restoration of honest proportions, because after the war the Jews have been over-represented in some places". On 6 June, the pro-Nazi movement of "German Christians" was founded. On 5 September, the synod of the Evangelical Church adopted the so-called "Aryan paragraph", declaring that "whoever is not of Aryan descent or is married to a person not of Aryan descent, cannot be nominated as a Church elder or functionary". The paragraph had to be withdrawn because of the protests it evoked, but fact remains that a majority of representatives had accepted it.

As Karl-Heinz Deschner has shown in detail, the Church explanation that its hands were forced into collaborating by its followers, is not correct. The Church leadership was simply keen on strengthening the Church's position, and it followed its usual Macchiavellian policy of allying with anyone who could serve the Church's interest best.[104] Given the persecution of Christians in Russia, it is understandable that the Church supported men who could be trusted to keep Communism at bay. In the German-held countries of Western Europe, priests called on young men to join the foreign legions of the German army to go and fight "godless Communism". But the Church's involvement didn't stop at tactical alliances against Communism: in some places the alliance had an ideological or programmatic dimension. In Slovakia, a Bishop led the pro-Nazi Government with a strong anti-Semitic policy. In Croatia, the Church was actively involved in the Ustasha policy against the Orthodox Serbs: "Kill one third, convert one third, expel one third."

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[103] W. Veen: *Collaboratie en Onderwerping. Het Duitse Protestantisme in 1933*, Narratio, Gorinchem 1991.

[104] K.-H. Deschner: "Mit Gott und den Faschisten", in *Konkret*, 12/1992.

In the 1930s South African Christians had started a movement inspired by Nazism and Fascism, which they appropriately called "Christian nationalism". At the end of the war, the Church helped many Nazis and Nazi collaborators to escape to Argentina and other safe havens.

To be sure, I am well aware that many Christians have joined the struggle against the Nazis. Another number of Christians tried to survive the Nazi period without compromising with Nazism, which they rejected as a materialist quasi-religion substituting State and race for God. I will also not repeat the common allegation that Pope Pius XII condoned the Nazi atrocities: in difficult circumstances, he more or less did what he could. Choices were difficult, as could be seen when the Bishops in Holland condemned the anti-Jewish policies and thereby provoked an even heavier crackdown on Jews because the Germans wanted to show that nobody was going to pressurise them. And those Christians who collaborated, often did so as a desperate choice of the "lesser evil" in the struggle against godless Communism. The Second World War was tragically cruel in forcing people to choose between collaborating with Stalin and collaborating with Hitler (it is doubtful that Hitler could have come to power without the threat of Communism, against which he could profile himself as the only capable saviour).

Another aspect of the problem is that Mussolini and Franco, with whom the Catholic Church collaborated formally and wholeheartedly, were very mild dictators compared with Hitler and Stalin, and for their time not exceptionally racist. Anti-Jewish decrees in Italy were largely taken under German pressure, and when Italian troops occupied the south-east of France, they actually released Jews taken captive by the French collaborating Vichy regime. In Ethiopia, the Italians had plans to 'italianize' the natives (cfr. Macaulay in India) rather than to oppress them as an intrinsically inferior race. Franco gave protection to all Jews who could prove some kind of family link with the Spanish Jews who had been expelled after 1492.

But these more positive or mitigating aspects of the Christian attitude towards Nazism and Fascism should not be used to conceal the darker side. If Christian propagandists try to pass the stigma of Nazism on to others, they must be reminded of their own Churches' involvement.

4.13. Caste vs. Nazism

Membership of a caste (*jati*) is based on birth, i.e. on ancestry or heredity. Does that make the caste system "racist"? In other words, is there a difference between pedigree and race, between endogamy and racial Apartheid?

Let us notice first of all that even certain anti-racists attach importance to ancestry. Mr. Van Lysebeth (see ch.1) is so happy to realize that his ancestors were not ugly Aryans but civilized pre-Aryans: "Thus, becoming conscious that the immense majority of the contemporary Europeans are Alpino-Mediterraneans and not [Aryan] steppe nomads, that is rediscovering our values, that is finding back our roots."[105] Personally, I have not felt anything concerning my ancestry when doing this study, certainly not the glow of "finding back our roots" which Mr. Van Lysebeth has experienced. Whether my ancestors were steppe nomads or dolichocephalic agriculturers, I just couldn't care less. That is also because I am sure that both those types of people (as well as hunter-gatherers, traders etc.) are present in my genealogical tree, as in his.

It is not just concerning his own roots that Mr. Van Lysebeth values ancestry and purity of blood. He quotes with approval Alain Daniélou: "The matriarchal system, in which the family property belongs to the woman and where daughter inherits from mother, is still practised in Kerala... Even in the royal families, the throne passes from mother to daughter, and the king is but a consort. This practice is considered to be the only efficient way of assuring the transmission of royal blood. According to the old Indian dictum, 'when a father says that this is my son, it is belief, when a mother says it, it is knowledge'; now, social institutions should be based on certainties and not on beliefs."[106] The "egalitarian matriarchal pre-Aryan civilization" may well have valued blood purity so much that it rejected a system which contained any risk of bastards being smuggled into the dynastic tree.

So, we notice that the valuation of heredity is a common phenomenon. Many people who have never known their fathers (who were, say, soldiers leaving pregnant girls behind in the conquered country, or nowadays the sperm donors in artificial insemination) invest a lot of energy in tracing them, and are very excited when finally going to meet their makers. While the importance of envi-

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[105] Van Lysebeth: *Tantra*, p.34.
[106] Van Lysebeth: *ibid.*, p.125.

ronment in shaping people's personalities is acknowledged, heredity is still "instinctively" considered equally important.

It is simply true that there is a relatively strong statistical correlation between parents and children as to character traits ("family traits") and abilities, and this correlation does not altogether disappear when we consider children who have been separated from their parents shortly after birth. The ancients could notice this impact of heredity in their own and in neighbouring families, but even more clearly among animals. With their usually quicker succession of generations, it was easy to recognize, for instance, a lineage of fast race-horses, or of faithful hunting-dogs. Even if we give less relative importance to heredity, we can understand how people with good common sense came to attach so much value to it, and that without accusing them of "Nazi" prejudices.

In China, the lineage of descendants of Confucius has traditionally been accorded special honour, and that during 25 centuries till today. Among Muslims, there is a whole culture of tracing genealogies to the companions of the Prophet, and preferably to the Prophet himself. Everyone who prefixes his name with Sayyid wears his pretended Prophetic ancestry on his sleeve. Shiites have even claimed that the "commander of the Faithful" should be a descendent of Mohammed. In the Bible and other places, we find people paying for the misdeeds of their ancestors: even guilt was hereditary, just like honour. So many nations have accepted (and woven a mystic aura around) hereditary kingship. After Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, a Congressman was cited in our papers as saying: "This much is certain, that India can only be ruled by a Gandhi." That was of course ridiculous; but it was not racism or Nazism.

The difference between pedigree and race is "only gradual" and yet it is crucial. There is a sharp difference between the traditional respect for heredity and the modern ideology of racism. Traditional societies acknowledged pride of pedigree as legitimate, and often had a system of according predetermined social roles and duties and privileges to people on account of their blood lineage. The caste system is an elaborate example of this traditional deference to heredity. These pre-modern societies made distinctions within themselves between people of noble birth and people of lowly birth. In every group of people, no matter how racially homogeneous, they expected a division between nobles and com-

moners to develop: real-life experiences would force the best to come on top, and this would be an explicitation of their genetic potential, which their descendants would naturally inherit.

By contrast, racism postulates a predominant equality within a society, as long as it is racially homogeneous. The distinction between nobles and commoners of what is conceived as the "race", is blurred and ignored, and the race as a whole is promoted to the rank of a noble race. Meanwhile, an enemy "race" is downgraded to the rank of inferior race, including the nobility class within that race. In the enemy race too, the traditional hierarchy, whether based on heredity or otherwise, is denied, and a homogeneous "inferiority" is projected onto it.

Nazism was a socialist movement. The full name of the Nazi party was *National Socialist German Workers' Party.* The inclusion of the term "socialist" was, in spite of what declared socialists may say, not just a cunning terminological trick. The Nazi party was really a socialist party, which realized quite a welfare and social upliftment programme during its brief stay in power. Nazism was a mass movement, a typically modern phenomenon, virtually unknown in traditional societies. It accepted the idea of equality, at least within the nation. Instead of the traditional notion of a hierarchy within every nation (modelled on the hierarchy within every family), Nazism postulated a hierarchy among otherwise homogeneous nations.

The German nation was on top, followed by the other Germanic nations, esp. the English. Then came the other "Aryans", notably the Latins, among whom the Italian ally. Slavs, by contrast, were only third-class Aryans, and came after the specially created category of "honorary Aryans": Germany's "non-Aryan" allies, the Hungarians and the Japanese. Obvious and unmitigated non-Aryans like the Black Africans were placed another step lower. The most miserable of all were the doomed, rootless wanderers, the Gypsies and the Jews. The Gypsies were "Aryans" at least by linguistic standards (they speak a kind of Panjabi), so they came to exemplify the inconsistency of the Nazi race hierarchy. For the Jews, even such theoretical mitigations could not be found: against them, the entire weight of centuries of Christian anti-Judaism and secular social envy came to be reformulated in racial terms.

What made the Nazi ideology "proletarian" in the extreme, was its denial (or at least downplaying) of a hierarchy within each na-

tion. The Nazis taught that it was better to be a German sweeper than to be a Polish nobleman or a Jewish scientist. Not individual achievement, not individual pedigree and noble birth, but simple membership of the Master Nation was the most important thing. This sounded like a curse to adherents of the pre-modern society with its graded hierarchy within each nation.

Nazism was radically different from the pre-modern society with its graded inequality, its guilds with their special duties and privileges, and its aristocracy. Nazism was strictly egalitarian, at least within the nation. It homogenized and uniformized. It abolished the local autonomy and special status of the traditional German counties and duchies and more such relics of the feudal past. It continued the process of neutralizing the privileges of the nobility, which had been started with the downfall of the second Reich in 1918. For a less political example, it abolished the traditional students' guilds which, with their distinctive dress and rituals, had been a training-ground for the traditional elites. Where the inequality of traditional and feudal society had been a diverse and colourful affair, Nazism imposed a uniformity and homogeneity on the nation, which then had to realize its collective inequality vis-a-vis other nations.

The Leader principle (*Führerprinzip*) inherent in Nazism was highly foreign to traditional society. There, the king had limited powers (royal absolutism only emerged in the 16th or 17th century), usually restricted to times of war. The leader principle was age-old, not as a social institution but as a typical phenomenon in war, when soldiers would blindly obey the man who had proven his capacity for victory. In peacetime, guilds had their autonomy, regions had their second-rank rulers (vassals), cities enjoyed freedom charters. Society was decentralized in several ways, and between the individual and the empire stood a number of intermediary levels of social organization. These intermediary levels formed a buffer against totalitarianism.

Germany had its *Führer*, Italy its *Duce*, Spain its *Caudillo*. But unquestioning obedience to the leader was also explicitly present in non-Fascist movements and countries. After the Communist take-over, the Chinese had their Great Helmsman, the North-Koreans their Great Leader, the Romanians their *Conducator*. The Muslim League had its *Qaid-e-Azam*, Congress had its Mahatma, the Indian National Army had its Netaji. The Dalits too professed

an unquestioning obedience to their leader, Dr. Ambedkar (they promised to follow him in mass conversion to another religion even before he had informed them which religion he had in mind). Today, this kind of leader principle is at work in person-centred parties like the Shiv Sena (Bal Thackeray) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram). The fact that the enumerated movements have a strong leader does not in itself make them Fascist: they may function according to the leader principle to an extent, but not choose it as their political doctrine.

In traditional societies, the leader principle only surfaced in times of need. In the Roman republic (510-27 BC), which scrupulously avoided every form of monarchic rule, the emergency leader principle was formalized as follows: if war broke out, a dictator was elected, and he led the state for six months, after which power came back automatically to the senate and consuls. The Germanic tribes had a similar system of allegiance to a central ruler in times of emergency, always subject to the sovereignty of the annual session of the tribal assembly. To be sure, the lowest social classes were not represented in these traditional parliaments, but still this system was very different from autocratic or totalitarian systems. Mature societies do not entertain the leader principle except in exceptional circumstances. The fact that the leader principle could become a voguish political ideology, an alternative for sovereignty of the representative assembly, was a disease symptom of the deep political and cultural crisis in which Europe found itself after 1918.

Nazism, like its twin brother Stalinism, abolished the levels that stood between the central controller and the naked individual. To the relative credit of Nazism, it must be admitted that in this respect it was less thorough than Stalinism. While of course it waged propaganda campaigns and tried to influence the people, it did not try for the absolute thought control which Stalinism attempted. It also did not try to abolish the family, that feudal relic standing in the way of true socialism, as Lenin had done. But the point we want to make here, is that both Nazism and Stalinism were polarizing society into an absolute power centre on the one hand and atomized individuals on the other, and that this approach was the very antithesis of the "organic" layeredness of traditional society.

Historically, the representatives of traditional society either opposed Hitler or collaborated with him as a lesser evil against the anarchy of the Weimar republic and the threat of Bolshevism. The

traditional nobility had at first hoped it could use Hitler to clean up the Weimar disorder and restore Germany's territorial integrity, only to bring back a state similar to the Kaiser's pre-1918 Second Empire. When Hitler proved to be stronger, these circles remained recalcitrant. It was by people from among them that several attempts on Hitler's life were made. It was they who had preferred a cease-fire in 1944, when Hitler chose to fight on to the last man (so that he could at least complete his extermination of the Jews which war's end would have exposed and interrupted). In Belgium, the German governor in 1940-44, the nobleman Alexander von Falkenhausen, actually leaked the lists of wanted Jews to give them a chance to escape, because privately he was disgusted with Hitler's vulgar anti-Judaism (he was given official thanks some years after the war). For this class of people, Hitler as the man in power was to be supported for the sake of Germany, but they rejected Hitler's extremism and realized that it could be an unjustifiable liability.

A more ideological opposition to Hitler came from traditionalist intellectuals who represented a current known as the "Conservative Revolution", with Oswald Spengler as its most famous exponent. Because of his stand for "civilization" and against "barbarity", the Nazis had hoped to co-opt Spengler in their attempt to pass as Europe's last hope against encroaching barbarity, but Spengler declined the honour, and made a sharp (rightist) criticism of Nazism in his book *Das Jahre der Entscheidung* ("The Year of Decision"). Some representatives of this movement ended up collaborating with the "lesser evil", others chose for the actual or the "inner" emigration. After the war, Julius Evola, veteran of the Fascist regime, became a spokesman of this movement, esp. with his rightist critique of Fascism, *Gli Uomini e le Rovine* ("Man amidst the ruins", 1953). In post-Communist Europe, there is a substantial revival of the ideas of the Conservative Revolution, most notably in the French *Nouvelle Droite* ("New Right"), with Alain de Benoist as its leading thinker. It remains to be seen whether this movement will be able to really free itself from the suspicion of being a cloak of respectability for closet neo-Fascists.

The distinction between superior race doctrine and aristocracy brings us back to the term *Arya*. Its classical meaning, attested in Indo-Iranian, Greek and perhaps Celtic, is "noble". This may describe individual character, but sociologically it is linked with the class of nobles, the *aristoi* (Greek: "those with the most *aretè*/vir-

tue", "the most *arya* ones"). To the extent that the term implies a social system, it is doubtlessly the aristocratic system, the one in which the nobles direct the course of society. And in practice, during most of human history, this would usually mean a hereditary nobility, even if not rigidly.

This aristocratic meaning of *Arya* is totally betrayed if we give the term a racial content. It is quite exceptional that a division in aristocrats and commoners coincides with an ethnic (which in turn is not yet a racial) division: thus, the story that in France the nobility consists of the descendants of the Germanic invaders, has proven to be untenable. The case of the aristocratic Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority in Rwanda and Burundi may provide a better example, but it dates back only to the Tutsi invasion of about 1700 AD. The aristocratic view contends precisely that in any seemingly homogeneous ethnic group, differences in quality are bound to surface.

Now, the racist notion of "Aryan race" of necessity includes the vulgar members of that race, and excludes the genuine nobles belonging to other races. This levelling of all race members to the common standard of sheer race membership (assuming for now that race membership can be sharply determined), is the diametrical opposite of the hierarchic differentiation typical for the traditional aristocratic view. The system of hereditary nobility, no matter how outdated and unpalatable modern people may find it, is substantially different from racism and from Nazism.

Another difference between the aristocratic and the racist view, is that the former allows for social mobility, albeit limited and gradual. Just like Brahmins have consecrated the entry of newcomers into the Arya castes, so the king could promote meritorious citizens into the nobility. In fact, even the sons of the nobles were not automatically members of their hereditary class: they had to be "knighted" after passing certain tests, and only then did they become noblemen (just like an Arya's son only becomes a full caste member after initiation). In ancient Europe, after a newcomer was promoted to a noble rank, it still took three generations before his family was indisputably part of the nobility: gradedness was the key to social relations in the caste or feudal society. Moreover, one could gain a noble rank by adoption (non-biological sonship), and lose it by expulsion from the family. By contrast, under Nazi rule, no promotion from the Jewish race to the Aryan race was possible.

No matter if a Jew renounced his religion and assimilated completely: once a Jew (and: once a Jew's descendent), always a Jew. One cannot change lead into gold, so one cannot change one race into another race: the cleavage between the races was understood as absolute.

The degree to which the caste system in the pre-Islamic period was a rigid application of this belief in heredity, is a matter of debate. It was certainly not a racial division, and for all we know, it was a flexible division. Whoever managed to become the king, no matter how "tribal" or "of lowly descent" he was, became a Kshatriya, entitled to receive the sacred thread, by the mere fact of acquiring this Kshatriya position in society (much later, this became less obvious, witness the Brahminical quarrels over the coronation of Shivaji; at any rate, he was initiated as Kshatriya). Whoever became successful in business, could claim the status of Vaishya. Mr. Van Lysebeth presents it as if Brahmins were being "bribed" when they ritually accorded *Arya* status to upcoming individuals and classes; but at least he has acknowledged that this was a frequently occurring development. Even in the Muslim period, when the caste system hardened, the system was merely an unusually rigid application of a belief in the impact of heredity that was still very common worldwide.

Add to this that the aristocratic view of society allows the inferior classes to exist, to live, to prosper, to have their own customs, to have a measure of guild autonomy; though not to rule society as a whole. If that had been the Nazis' outlook, Hitler would never have become a pejorative household word, a bogey for all seasons. Most regimes in history, and a great many contemporary ones, have not been willing to let the masses share in the political decision-making process. What set Nazism totally apart was its well-planned and thoroughly executed genocide of two of its inferior-placed hereditary communities, the Jews and the Gypsies. This extreme form of "interference" in the underclasses' existence was totally at variance with the aristocratic aloofness from and non-interference in the internal affairs of those classes branded as inferior.

Alain Daniélou has given a very positive description of the caste system, emphasizing the pluralism and freedom (!) it creates. As a musician, he himself was adopted into one of the Dravidian Shudra castes, but this "Backward" position has not kept him from

being a vocal defender of traditional Hindu society.[107] A writer of Hare Krishna persuasion, Harikesha Swami Vishnupada, has even argued that the ills of modern society can only be cured by instituting the *Varnashramadharma*.[108]

To keep the caste system in perspective, we should not forget that till today, people of different status get a different treatment. For instance, an ex-Prime Minister of my country was convicted for financial crimes, but he only got a suspended sentence whereas pickpockets who steal far smaller amounts of money spend months in prison; and people find this reasonable, because for a man of status, the humiliation is greater and more important than any actual punishment. Even today, a professor or a priest will be treated with more respect than a labourer, and this is not questioned. Further, in the democratic countries too, a professor's daughter does not usually marry a garbage-collector; though a garbage-collector's *son* has become acceptable, if he himself has achieved a better status. In this respect, Hindu society is only one or two generations behind the Enlightened West.

Hereditary *jati* inequality has become unacceptable, but *varna*-specific privileges are still with us. The Brahmins of modern society, the builders of public consciousness, I mean the journalists, are very unashamed about claiming a special position. Read Indian secularist editorials, and you will see that they readily demand freedoms which they will not concede to others, that they demand treatment to be meted out to others which they would not tolerate themselves (like beating up demonstrators of the wrong opinion "in the public interest"), that they think very highly of their own moral standing, that they justify double standards with specious arguments which even Manu could not have thought up.

We should also pay attention to the re-appearance of caste phenomena in modern multi-ethnic societies. In the US, the police recruits Blacks and Hispanics because in certain difficult neighbourhoods, the people just don't accept being policed by outsiders to their ethnic group. This is a reincarnation of the caste practice of bringing disputes before a caste *panchayat*, rather than having a trespassing caste member judged by outsiders. In general, there is

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107 See his *Les Quatre Sens de la Vie* (French: "The four senses of life" — he links the four *varnas* with the four *purusharthas* or life goals), Paris 1976.

108 Harikesha Swami Vishnupada: *Varnashrama Manifesto for Social Sanity*, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, New York 1981.

now in Western societies a lot of self-organization of different groups who insist on preserving their own collective identity.

A caste-type division in the Western world which seemed to be disappearing, but is now making a come-back with the inflow of Muslims, is the separateness between religion-based communities. In mixed-religion countries, the religious communities often have their own school network, cultural organizations, even trade-union or political party. Until the 1960s, in my country the Catholics and the "humanists" (atheists) were simply two separate societies, and it was a drama in Catholic families if a daughter wanted to marry an unbeliever (just like in Holland it was dramatic for a Protestant family if a daughter wanted to marry a Catholic). The state accepted the wish of these sections of society to live separately, by effectively entrusting many tasks in education and social security to the Catholic and Humanist/Socialist power structures. From the cradle to the grave, you were a member of the Catholic or the Socialist "pillar" (vertical structure present at every level of social life with appropriate institutions and services), and while modern individualism has undermined the concomitant caste mentality, the separate structures are still in place. Muslim immigrants are now setting up their own "pillar".

It seems that many human beings do not want to be just members of mankind and citizens of the state: they want to be members of culturally homogeneous groups, call them tribes if you want, even regardless of any economic advantages that it might have, for the sake of "identity". Hindu social philosophy has, like Confucian or traditional Catholic (as opposed to Biblical fundamentalist) social teachings, and unlike Socialism, been anti-utopian: it accepted the seemingly irrepressible urges and time-honoured customs, and tried to regulate these rather than change them.

None of this amounts to acceptance of a separate status purely based on birth: modernity has effectively defeated this belief that heredity was sufficient to determine one's status in life. At this point, Hindu society is catching up. But in the West and in most societies, privileges were attached to high birth and disadvantages to low birth only a couple of generations ago. If we want to keep our discourse sane and reasonable, we must stop branding as Nazi and racist every view that differs from our modern individualistic view. The idea that man's main choices in life can and should be made radically independent of family background and environ-

ment, is quite young.

On the spiritual level, Upanishadic, Buddhist, Taoist and other thinkers have said millennia ago that something deep inside is totally free from all those worldly distinctions and determinations; but the ambition to extend this indeterminateness to worldly functions and opportunities, is not more than a few centuries old, and has been conquering the world only gradually. During most of human history, nearly all human beings adhered to and acted upon the belief that for practical purposes, we are unequal and our specific quality is in large measure determined by our ancestry. You consign a very large part of your ancestry to hell if you brand as "Nazi" this very understandable and widespread traditional belief.

4.14. Religions and equality

Ever since equality became an accepted social value, apologists of many religions have been claiming that their religion is the original champion of equality. They are merely practising an old trick of the religion salesman's trade: proving the pioneering role of your product in those trends that happen to be fashionable.

In fact, very few religions in history have chosen social equality as one of their goals. And when we look at their history, we find them hardly worthy of imitation.

Around 490, the *Mazdakites* (followers of Mazdak, a quasi-Manichaean preacher) managed to start an equalitarian experiment in Iran. Mazdak influenced the Sassanian king Kawadh to carry out his social programme: abolishing private property and the family. According to historians, "the king hoped that by abolishing property and the family, he would rule over a docile mass. The Mazdakites favoured the abolition of all social inequalities, chiefly of private property, the main cause of all hatred. Everything was to be held in common, including women."[109] Naturally, this programme of anarchy (which, had it continued, would have meant the law of the jungle) was understood by the king as the straight road to totalitarian rule. Our historians blame "the rich and the Mazdean clergy" for feeling "directly threatened" by this equalitarian-cum-totalitarian current. At any rate, these conservative forces captured power and restored the king only to the throne when he agreed to put down the Mazdakite agitation.

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[109] *Encyclopedia Brittannica*, article *Zoroastrianism and Parsiism.*

In 1534, the Protestant sect of the *Anabaptists* captured power in the German city of Münster. This was a fanatical sect known for its iconoclasm and massacres of unbelievers, which drew its popularity mainly from its anti-rich platform. According to historians: "The 'Evangelium of the little man' unleashed radical outbreaks and jeopardized the Reformation. Unclear in their teachings, the *Anabaptists* and *'Schwärmer'* ('enthusiasts') rejected any kind of governmental and ecclesiastical organization; they believed in personal revelation, prophetic calling, the 'inner light' and sanctification of man through rebaptism... Andreas Bodenstein (alias Karlstadt)'s assault on images became the rallying-cry of the Anabaptists. Under the influence of religious visions [Karlstadt and others] preached communistic upheavals and incited those with social grievances... [The Anabaptist preacher] Melchior Hofmann preached the destruction of the godless and proclaimed the beginning of the 'Millennium of Christ' for the year 1533. In 1534/35, the Melchiorites established the reign of the Anabaptists in Münster... Under siege, the religious fanaticism in the 'Kingdom of Zion' intensified (communally held property, polygamy). After the conquest, all those 'disposed to Anabaptism' were persecuted."[110]

Among Liberation Theologians, the Anabaptists are a favourite point of reference because of their equalitarianism. But an objective reading of their teachings reveals them to be a lunatic millenniarist movement, a type which fatefully reappears now and then in the context of the Prophetic religions. Had they continued, their communities would at best have fared no better than those "hippie communes" of about 1970, which almost invariably ended in quarrels, disillusionment, and dissolution.

The extremism which religious movements render possible, is a bad basis for social reform. It brings its bit of equality in a world-denying, revolutionary way. After the experience of the past century, there is no excuse anymore for ignorance about the fatal outcome of revolutionary upheavals. Equality can only come about through carefully monitored long-term social reform, not based on "religious visions" but on a cool scientific understanding of man and society.

Apart from a few sects which did carry out short-lived experiments in egalitarianism, none of the world's religions can claim to

[110] *Penguin Atlas of History*, vol.1, p.233.

be a "religion of equality", as their modern propagandists want us to see them. The claims of egalitarianism made on behalf of neo-Sikhism, neo-Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, are demonstrably false.

The claims on behalf of Ambedkarite Buddhism will be examined in ch.5.8. In general, we can say that Buddha gave equal treatment to the candidates for monkhood, but that he did not bother about equality in lay society.

For Sikhism, we may quote the pro-Sikh historian W.H. McLeod: "[The] acknowledgement of caste identities was presumably acceptable to the Gurus, for it receives unselfconscious treatment from the impeccably orthodox Bhai Gurdas, and the Gurus themselves married their children according to traditional caste prescriptions. The anti-caste thrust of the Gurus' teachings must thus be seen as a doctrine which referred to spiritual deliverance and to the assemblies which helped individuals to achieve that objective. It is also legitimate to deduce a firm rejection of injustice or hurtful discrimination based on caste status. What is not implied is a total obliteration of caste identity."

In a footnote, McLeod adds: "When this point was made in *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, it prompted the accusation that the Gurus were being labelled as insincere in their opposition to caste. This was not the case. The Gurus accepted the marital obligations of caste, but were totally opposed to the idea that caste involved any discrimination or that it had any bearing upon the individuals' access to liberation. The latter, all-important to the Gurus, was provided by loyalty to the divine name."[111]

Like other *bhakti* teachers, the Sikh gurus taught that everyone can attain *moksha*, depending on his effort and devotion, not on his birth or status. In a situation where some (though by no means all) Brahmins thought that salvation was their own caste privilege, it was very good and important that Hindu reformers like Guru Nanak emphasized the universal character of Hindu spirituality. But it would be incorrect and a sheer projection of modern concerns to attribute to them a programme of abolition of caste. On the other hand, one cannot accuse the Sikh gurus of anyhow imposing forms of inequality. As we shall see, certain other traditions have not only accepted existing social inequalities, but have im-

[111] W.H. McLeod: *Who is a Sikh?*, p.21.

posed new ones.

About the Tantric tradition within Hinduism, it has also been claimed that it wanted to abolish caste. But an authoritative history book says: "The Tantras did not make much discrimination between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins in the spiritual sphere. All were entitled to read the Tantras and recite the Tantric *mantras*. But it must be admitted that the Tantras recognized castes for all secular purposes."[112]

The one case of a pre-modern Hindu reformer who seems to have aimed at the abolition of caste in society, was Basava, regarded as the founder of Virashaivism. He encouraged inter-caste marriage, which is indeed the straight way to the biological dissolution of caste (i.e. of the now existing castes). Interestingly, he was a Brahmin as well as a high-ranking minister, i.e. he was high-up in both the ritual and the political hierarchy. In his case, an attempt to abolish caste cannot be called a "revolt", but rather an "experiment". At any rate, before too long his sect became just another caste.

George L. Hart points out the ritual basis of Basava's reform, usually unmentioned in motivated one-dimensional accounts of his "social revolution". Caste taboo, and the sin of breaking it, belong to the world, but not in the sacred space of the temple. Now, the Virashaiva considers his own body as a "walking temple" (*jangama*). Therefore: "It seems to me that this institution of the *jangama* can be understood in terms of the power of the god in the bhakti temple to release sins. What the Virashaiva devotee wishes to do is to keep himself within the sacred boundaries of a temple. So long as the devotee wears the linga (i.e. the deity) around his neck and so long as he is sincere and dvoted enough to remain a movable temple, he can never go out into the world and has nothing to fear from the sins and offences against order that others in South India have to contend with. This is, I feel, the explanation of the extreme social behaviour of the early Virashaivas, who attempted to marry a Brahmin woman and a pariah man (something no other bhakti sect has ever done to my knowledge)... Unfortunately for them, their religion was not proof against temporal forces, and they were severly punished by the king for their behaviour, which must have appeared as extremely danger-

[112] R.C. Majumdar ed.: *History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol.VII: *The Moghul Empire*, p.638.

ous to ***all*** outside their sect."[113]

Their violation of caste rules appeared dangerous not only to the Brahmins, but to all those subscribing to the beliefs underlying caste rules, i.e. beliefs and rules which (as we have seen in ch.3.8) are shared by communities as un-Brahminical as the tribals. Beliefs which, moreover, were shared by the Virashaivas themselves, the difference being that they did not apply the concomitant rules to themselves, because they believed themselves to be constantly in sacred temple space, and not in profane space like everyone else: a typical Brahminical conceit.

About the story of inequality, injustice and cruelty perpetrated by Christians, often in the name of Christianity, enough has been written. Some Liberation Theologians have joined in the effort of tabulating the Church's misdeeds, which they mostly conceive as 'sins against the true spirit of Christianity'. Non-Christian writers have gone a step further, and attacked not the abuse of Christianity, i.e. the crimes that were committed by Christians in spite of true Christian doctrine; but the crimes committed in application of Christian doctrine. For instance, the leftist scholar Karl-Heinz Deschner's *Kriminalgeschichte des Christentums* (German: "Criminal History of Christianity") sets out explicitly to tabulate not the crimes of the Church, but the crimes of Christianity. I do not agree with his scathing and triumphalist anti-Christian tone, but the facts he cites, thousands of pages on end, are authentic.

For the flavour, let us hear an unprejudiced first-hand witness to the christianization of America, the Dominican Father Bartolomé de las Casas, which has been reproduced in many papers on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Columbus' landing in America. He wrote in his memoirs: "Forty years they ranged those lands, massacring the wretched Indians until on the island of Hispaniola [= Haiti and the Dominican Republic], which in 1492 had a population estimated at three million people, scarcely three hundred Indians remained to be counted... Thirty islands in the neighbourhood of San Juan were entirely depopulated. On the side of the continent, kingdom after kingdom was desolated, tribe after tribe exterminated. Twelve million Indians on those continental lands perished under the barbarous handling of the Spaniards... The pedigree of a Spanish bloodhound has nothing prouder in its record

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[113] George L. Hart: "The Nature of Tamil Devotion", in Deshpande and Hook: *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, p.11-34, spec. p.22-23. Emphasis added.

than the credit of half a thousand dead or mangled Indians. Some natives they hung on gibbets, and it was their reverential custom to gather at a time sufficient victims to hang thirteen in a row and thus piously to commemorate Christ and the Twelve Apostles... I have been an eye-witness to all these cruelties and infinite number of others which I pass over in silence."

It is a redeeming feature of Christian history that there are protest writings like those of Father de las Casas. But the facts which he has described, are just as much Christian history. Both Christianity and Islam have condoned the existing inequalities of slavery, feudalism and imperialism; that much they have in common with many religious traditions. But they have done more: they have created new forms of inequality, and their doctrines have contributed to intensifying rather than alleviating existing inequalities.

4.15. Islam and equality

Nowadays, Islam is praised time and again as a "religion of equality". But this is a myth with an unusually thin coating of even first-sight credibility. According to the Marxist, pro-Palestinian and generally pro-Muslim author Lucas Catherine, equality is not as Islamic as we are expected to believe: "The Quran not only stands for economic inequality in society. Inequality at all levels is God's will... He who wants to nullify this inequality, is a blasphemer, especially if he belongs to the privileged himself."[114] The Quran itself is unambiguous in endorsing inequality as a God-ordained natural condition for mankind:

- "To some God has given more than He has to others. Those who are so favoured will not allow their slaves an equal share in what they have. Would they deny God's goodness?" (16:71)
- "Your Lord gives abundantly to whom He will and sparingly to whom He pleases." (17:70 and 42:12)
- "It is We who deal out to them their livelihood in this world, exalting some in rank above others, so that the one may take the other into his service." (43:32)

Islamic history bears out the Islamic non-interest in equality, even where local custom could provide a good basis for a measure

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[114] L. Catherine: ***In naam van de islam. Godsdienst als politiek argument bij Mohammed en Khomeini*** (Dutch: "In the name of Islam. Religion as a political argument for Mohammed and Khomeini") (EPO, Antwerp 1985), p.69.

of equalitarianism. For instance, in an article on Moroccan Islam, Prof. J.M.M. van Amersfoort observes: "It is often said that the Muslim world is equalitarian. But in North Africa, this is not quite the case, and there the impulse to equality comes from the old 'heathen' tribal tradition."[115] Even in homogeneous Muslim societies, there is no socio-economic equality.

The position of non-Muslims in Muslim societies was much worse: they had to accept humiliating conditions in exchange for the right to live, if they were not given an outright choice between conversion and death. This steep inequality between Muslims and non-Muslims is an intrinsic feature of Islamic doctrine, and the newly emerging Muslim states of the post-colonial era have not failed to re-instate this inequality, albeit in different degrees of intensity. For a description of the plight of these *kafirs* and *zimmis*, I refer to specialized works,[116] and we will now move on to considering a form of inequality that has been practised by Islam on an unprecedented scale: slavery.

According to V.T. Rajshekar, "the plight of the Dalits is worse than slavery". That is easy talk for someone who doesn't have the experience of enslavement. Plenty of voices in history, slaves and others, have claimed that anything — poverty, privation, social exclusion — is better than slavery, the utmost humiliation. After the Blacks in the southern United States were freed, many of them starved because they were no longer the property of a slave-owner who had an interest in feeding them to keep them fit for work; they were still looked down upon, with no effective political rights let alone equality; and yet, they did not say that they would prefer slavery after all. But V.T. Rajshekar has an interest in minimizing the horrors of slavery: it was an institution promoted by his favourite religion, Islam.

Very little critical work has so far been done on the topic of slavery in Islam. What we have is Christian anti-Muslim polemics of a bygone age, and pro-Muslim apologetics started by 19th-century orientalists who created a romantic picture of Islam, attributing

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[115] J.M.M. van Amersfoort: "Islamisering, cultuurcontact en cultuurconflict", in Andreas Eppink ed.: *Cultuurcontact en cultuurconflict* (Dick Coutinho, Muiderberg 1988), p.115.

[116] E.g.: K.S. Lal: The Legacy of *Muslim Rule in India*, Bat Ye'or: *The Dhimmi* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, London 1984 (1980)) and *Les Chrétiens d'Orient entre Jihad et Dhimmitude* (French: "Christian communities of the Orient between *jihad* and *zimmi*-status", Editions du Cerf, Paris 1991).

modern qualities (such as egalitarianism) to it, of which most Muslims had not even thought yet, but which would soon become the standard arguments of modern Islamic propaganda. For a typical example: in 1887, the Dutch orientalist C. Snouck Hurgronje ridiculed the "fantasies" that motivated the British to work for the termination of the slave trade from Africa to the Middle East. He claimed that "public opinion in Europe has been misled concerning Muslim slavery by a confusion between American and Oriental conditions... As things are now, for most of the slaves their abduction was a blessing... They themselves were convinced that it was slavery that first made human beings of them."[117]

More recently, claiming that slavery could be a good thing has become unacceptable, so now the line of Islamic propagandists and their fellow-travellers is that slavery in Islam has been very much exaggerated, and that in fact Islam has contributed immensely to the abolition of slavery. According to Prof. Syed Habibul Haq Nadvi, "the institution of slavery was liquidated by Islam for ever".[118] Unfortunately for him, the facts of history do not bear out his fond belief.

We get a fairly clear picture of slavery in Islam in a path-breaking study published in 1990: *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry*, by Bernard Lewis. The book was reviewed by David Brion Davis, and his article adds some valuable information, based on his own book: *Slavery and Human Progress*. From these sources, I will summarize an outline of slavery in Islam.

The spotlight is first directed to the abolition of slavery in the Ottoman empire. In 1855, when the Turks were leaning heavily on Western help to support their economy and especially to wage the Crimea War, they were pressured into issuing (or at least announcing for the next few years) several laudable decrees. One was the emancipation of the *zimmi* populations, who were to acquire legal and political equality with the Muslims. In many respects, this emancipation remained theoretical, but even so, it was a dramatic step away from Islamic law and tradition. In the eyes of devout Muslims, this concession to the infidel dogs branded the Ottoman rulers as apostates and traitors of Islam. The second revolutionary

[117] Quoted in David Brion Davis: "Slaves in Islam", review in *The New York Review of Books*, 11/10/1990.

[118] S.H.H. Nadvi: "The Institution of Slavery & Human Rights", in *Islamic Order* quarterly (Karachi), 1/1989, p.79.

decree was the prohibition of slave trade.

To the Arabs in the Hejaz (the area containing Mecca and Medina), this un-Islamic and Western-influenced decision was the right occasion to throw off the yoke of the Ottomans, who were weakened and tied down at a distant war front. Bernard Lewis informs us that the Arab leader Shaykh Jamal issued a legal ruling "denouncing the ban on the slave trade as contrary to the holy law of Islam. Because of this anti-Islamic law, he said, together with such other anti-Islamic actions as allowing women to initiate divorce proceedings and to move around unveiled, the Turks had become apostates and heathens. It was lawful to kill them without incurring criminal penalties or bloodwit, and to enslave their children."

The Turks suppressed the Arab rebellion in 1856, but as a measure of reconciliation, they exempted the Hejaz area from the decree outlawing the trade in black slaves throughout the Ottoman empire. The Hejaz being the core area of the slave trade, the decree lost a lot of its impact, much to the dismay of Istambul's Western allies. The slave trade kept on flourishing in Arabia until the most recent times. In the 1920s and 30s, Britain still kept on trying to convince the Arabs to give up this bad habit. As late as 1960, Lord Shackleton reported to the House of Lords that African Muslims on pilgrimage to Mecca still sold slaves upon arrival, "using them as living traveller's cheques". There is no doubt that many thousands of slaves are still serving in the wealthy palaces of Arabia till today.

It is no coincidence that the most intensely Islamic countries, those least affected by modern influences, have preserved the institution of slavery. As Lewis writes: "The emergence of the holy men and the holy places as the last-ditch defenders of slavery against reform is only an apparent paradox. They were upholding an institution sanctified by scripture, law and tradition, and one which in their eyes was necessary to the maintenance of the social structure of Muslim life." Islam sanctions slavery: it imposes slavery on captives in the Holy War, and it condones slavery in general, though not the enslavement of a Muslim. On his deathbed, Mohammed urged his men to "take care of your slaves, feed them from what you eat, and clothe them from what you wear". He wanted slaves to be well-treated, true: that was an old tradition, already laid down 3000 years earlier in the Sumerian law books (which imposed pen-

alties for maltreatment of slaves). But he did not consider for a moment the abolition of slavery.

When in 1982, Mauretania at long last decided to abolish slavery, the consulted *ulema* stated that "it is within the competence of a government to prohibit slavery", but that "there is no religious necessity for the abolition of slavery". Naturally, with such mental outlook, it is proving very hard to turn the new law into a social reality, so that slavery has still not been eradicated in a number of Islamic states.[119]

How many slaves did the Muslims capture and transport from Africa (i.e. not speaking of those they took in Europe and Asia)? Davis has discussed some of the attempts to estimate the magnitude of the Islamic slave trade from the 7th to the 20th century. He concludes that "the key point is that the importation of black slaves into Islamic lands from Spain to India constituted a continuous, large-scale migration that in total may well have surpassed, over a period of twelve centuries, the African diaspora to the New World."[120] Add to this the fact that a large part of the slaves transported to America had also been bought from Muslim slave catchers, and it is undeniable that the majority of blacks carried off to slavery fell victim to Muslims, not to Pagans nor even to Christians.

One may object that if such large numbers of blacks were transported into the Islamic world, they should have left racial traces in the population of these countries. If they were that numerous, how could their racial characteristics disappear so completely? Davis explains this by "the high mortality rate (except in North America, black slave populations suffered a rapid decline and virtually disappeared, as in colonial Mexico, unless replenished by the slave trade); by assimilation with other peoples; and by the fact that many male slaves had been castrated".[121]

Islamic civilization did indeed practise castration of slaves on an unpredendented scale. Several cities in Africa were real factories of eunuchs; they were an expensive commodity as only 25% of the victims survived the operation. "[The French traveller] Chardin counted 3000 eunuchs in the Persian court. From the 17th century onwards, there were two kinds in the *serai* of Istambul: completely

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[119] About facts and figures of Islamic slavery in India, including the role of Muslim rule in creating or aggravating the quasi-slavery of "bonded labour", see K.S. Lal: *Legacy of Muslim Rule in India*.

[120] Davis: *Slavery and Human Progress*, p.45-56.

[121] D.B. Davis, 'Slavery in Islam', in *The New York Review of Books*, 11/10/1990, p.36.

emasculated blacks who were the only ones to be allowed to approach the women, and whites who had only undergone a removal of the testicles, and could not be trusted as completely as the former category. The latter were brought from the Middle East and North India... In the city of Golconda (Hyderabad), in the year 1659 alone, 22,000 individuals were emasculated."[122] Even apart from the harvest of Holy Wars, some areas, notably Bengal, were regular providers of eunuchs for the Muslim upper classes in Delhi, Isfahan or Samarkand.

After the Crimea War, the colonial powers put pressure on the Ottoman authorities to stop this practice, and in 1877 the British imposed an anti-slavery convention stipulating that whoever mutilated a boy would be prosecuted as a murderer in a court martial. Only this outside intervention could put an end to this cruel practice, and even then it took time: in 1880, Burton still reported industrial-scale mutilations in the East African city of Tawasha.

Prophet Mohammed cannot be held guilty: he prohibited mutilation (except as a legal punishment), which is why the orthodox Moghul emperor Aurangzeb also prohibited it. Yet, by sanctioning slave-taking, Islam must be held responsible for all that slavery entailed in practice: if you first tell people that Kafirs are doomed creatures without dignity, you should not be surprised if they are a bit careless with details like the slaves' bodily integrity.

Even without mutilation, slavery was not conducive to procreation. In another recent book on slavery, equally rich in unsuspected facts of Islamic slave-holding, Claude Messailloux lists childlessness as almost a defining characteristic of slavery in the Muslim world.[123] Slave women even killed or abandoned the children they did get, for fear of being separated from them or of seeing them die a miserable death. However, it is not true that these black populations disappeared completely: according to Davis, "in central India, however, there are communities of blacks who are the descendents of African slaves".

So far, not much new has been said. The unbiased reader already knew that Islam sanctions slavery and has assiduously practised it all through its history. What may come as a surprise though, is that Islam must be considered responsible for the institu-

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[122] Michel Erlich: *Les Mutilations Sexuelles* (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1991), p.59.

[123] C. Messailloux: *The Anthropology of Slavery*, part 1, chapter 3: "Sterility".

tion of *racial slavery*. According to Davis, there is "overwhelming evidence that racial slavery, as the modern world has come to know it, originated in medieval Islamic societies. Light-skinned Arabs, Berbers and Persians invented the long-distance slave trade that transported millions of sub-Saharan captives either by camel or by slave ships from East Africa to the Persian Gulf."

Muslim writers did make distinctions between different types of blacks: the Ethiopians were superior to the *Zanj* ("blacks", Bantu negroes), whom Maqdisi described as "people of black colour, flat noses, kinky hair, and little understanding or intelligence". On the other hand, the Muslims kept white slaves as well as black ones. But, writes Davis, "regardless of such minor distinctions and regardless of their continuing enslavement of white pagans and infidels from Eurasia, medieval Muslims came to associate the most degrading forms of labour with black slaves". Muslims regarded blacks as a race particularly submissive to slavery because, as the 14th-century scholar Ibn Khaldun put it, they "have little that is human and have properties that are quite similar to those of animals".

According to Davis, "racial distinctions played no appreciable part in the slave economies of antiquity, despite the Greeks' preference for enslaving 'barbarians' [which was a cultural, not a racial category] and despite the discriminatory biblical laws that applied to relations between Hebrew and 'Canaanite' bondsmen and their masters. During the centuries of Roman domination, slave populations contained a fortuitous mixture of captives. Bondage was a condition from which no one was exempt: including Greek scholars and poets, Turks, Scandinavians [etc.]. As late as the 14th and 15th centuries, continuing shipments of white slaves, some of them Christians, flowed from the booming slave markets on the northern Black Sea coast into Italy Spain, Egypt and the Mediterranean islands... From Barbados to Virginia, colonists long preferred English or Irish indentured servants as their main source of field labour... The prevalence and suffering of white slaves, serfs and indentured servants in the early modern period shows that there is nothing inevitable about limiting plantation slavery to people of African origin."

Such was the situation when Islam came on the scene: "In the 7th century, as in the earlier centuries of antiquity, neither slavery nor bitter ethnic and national rivalries seemed to generate what the

modern world would define as genuine racism."[124] And the Quran and the Sharia did not invent racism either: they too are innocent of racial discrimination. It is not Islamic doctrine that is responsible (as it is in the case of religious intolerance and *jihad*), but a contingent development in Muslim history. Mohammed was certainly not a racist: he had clearly stated that among Muslims, there should be no discrimination between Arab and non-Arab, nor between black and white. But within one generation after Mohammed's death, the first type of discrimination was institutionalized in many parts of the Islamic empire, where the Arab conquerors wanted to retain some privileges over the native converts; and the second type of discrimination was a matter of common opinion and a fact of life.

"By the late 7th century, however, blackness of skin was becoming a symbol that evoked distaste and contempt. In popular manuals of behaviour, affirmations of theoretical equality were soon reduced to formulas suggesting tolerance was desirable 'eventhough' there were obvious reasons not to be tolerant. 'Obey whoever is put in authority over you, even if he be a crop-nosed Ethiopian slave'; to prove your religious humility, marry someone who is pious and who will lower rather than exalt you, eventhough she is 'a slit-nosed black slave-woman'. As Lewis aptly notes, the message conveyed by countless maxims saying 'that piety outweighs blackness and impiety outweighs whiteness... [is] not the same as saying that whiteness and blackness do not matter.'"[125]

The impression of an emerging racism is confirmed by a number of complaints and apologies by poets of African or mixed parentage. Still in the 7th century, Suhaym lamented: "If my colour were pink, women would love me, but the Lord has marred me with blackness." Lewis quotes many more such verses, e.g.: "*Though* my hair is woolly and my skin coal-black, my hand is open and my colour bright"; "My colour is pitch-black, my hair is woolly, my appearance repulsive"; "I am a black man, some of you may find me offensive, I shall therefore sit and eat apart".

From the 10th century onwards, there is a considerable literature defending the blacks, citing brave and pious deeds performed by blacks, and denouncing racism as contrary to scripture: "Muslim jurists continued to insist that mankind was divided only by faith: all unbelievers, regardless of skin colour or ethnic origin, could

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[124] D.B. Davis: *ibid.*, p.37.
[125] D.B. Davis: *ibid.*

lawfully be enslaved in a jihad."[126] This again shows how racism was not as intrinsic to Islam as the discrimination against unbelievers, who have never found any defender among the Muslim writers. But the fact remains that these protest writings were directed against people with whom the scriptural argument could carry weight, viz. Muslims. It is Muslims who introduced the world to anti-black racism. To an extent, this Muslim scorn for blacks is confirmed by a similar attitude towards the brown Indians. In denouncing the Indian infidels, writers like Amir Khusrau did not miss a chance to spit on the skin colour of the "crow-faced Hindus".

Some Muslim writers who defended racism also drew upon the Old Testament story of the Noah's curse on the descendants of Ham (strictly, of Ham's son Canaan), who is considered to be the ancestor of the blacks, — the same story which the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa used to invoke in order to justify first black slavery, and later Apartheid. In fact, the Old Testament text never says that much: the curse of Ham's son Canaan is clearly not directed against the Blacks (who were not in the picture at all), but against the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the Promised Land, who were to be killed en masse by the Hebrews when they took possession of the land. The identification of Ham with the blacks (from which the linguistic term 'Hamitic languages' was derived) is a younger interpretation by the Syrian Church Father, Saint Ephrem of Nisibis. At any rate, some Muslims made use of this legend to justify the enslavement of the 'Hamites', just like the Afrikaner Calvinists did with their Kaffers ("niggers", from Arabic *kafir*, Pagan). On the other hand, some jurists rejected this story: the African jurist Ahmed Baba of Timbuktu wrote that "even assuming that Ham was the ancestor of the blacks, God is too merciful to punish millions of people for the sin of a single individual."[127]

In spite of these anti-racist voices, it is undeniable that Muslims have set the tone of anti-black racism which is making its effect felt till today. Lewis quotes numerous Muslims who describe blacks as "ugly, stupid, dishonest, frivolous and lighthearted, foul-smelling, gifted with a sense of musical rhythm, often inclined towards simple piety, but dominated by unbridled sexual lust". For instance, Ibn Butlan describes the black women as follows: "And the

[126] D.B. Davis: *ibid.*
[127] Discussed in B. Lewis: *op.cit.*, p.123-125.

blacker they are, the uglier their faces and the more pointed their teeth... there is no pleasure to be got from them, because of the smell of their armpits and the coarseness of their bodies." If this were only a matter of personal opinion, one might say that every one is entitled to his; but this was a background justification for slavery, on top of the religious right to enslave infidels of any colour.

Then again, what Lewis has demonstrated, is precisely that the enslavement of the blacks was not the result of racial prejudice, but rather that the converse is true: this racial prejudice was at least partly generated by the effective position of blacks as slaves of the Muslims. The ordinary inhabitant of Baghdad never saw any blacks except as slaves, and these hard-working slaves were sweating all day, while the bathing-water was not exactly reserved for them, so indeed they were dirty and "foul-smelling", which got interpreted as a characteristic of blacks rather than of slaves. Similarly, the black slaves did not get any education, so blacks came to be regarded as stupid. Slavery is a degrading condition, and many people do lose their dignity when they are kept in this condition for a long time.

The size and systematic nature of Islamic black slavery, and the decisive contribution of Muslims to the creation of anti-black racism, should not make us forget the equally large-scale and systematic practice of white slavery by Muslims. According to Davis: "For whatever reasons, as the Islamic slave populations became more specialized, the Eurasian captives were generally assigned to positions of higher status and privilege while Africans were reduced to the most menial and arduous labour. The Ottoman capture of Constantinople in 1453 gradually diverted the immense flow of slaves from the Crimea, the Balkans and the steppes of Western Asia to the Islamic markets. As a result, Christian slave merchants turned increasingly to Moorish captives or to blacks transported across the Sahara to the Mediterranean *[by Muslims]* or purchased by the Portuguese along the coast of West Africa *[mostly from Muslims]*. Later on, the southward expansion of Russia, culminating in the annexation of Crimea in 1783, gradually shut off the supply of white slaves to even the Islamic markets. Except for the small numbers of Europeans taken hostage by corsairs, the Islamic lands also became dependent on the slave merchants of sub-Saharan Africa. As Africa became almost synonymous with slavery, the

world forgot the eagerness with which Tatars and other Black Sea peoples had sold millions of Ukrainians, Georgians, Circassians, Armenians, Bulgarians, Slavs and Turks."

When in 1441, the Portuguese prince Henry the Navigator saw a group of black slaves captured from a Muslim caravan on the Mauretanian coast, he "reflected with great pleasure upon the salvation of these souls that before were lost".[128] Davis comments: "No doubt Henry was unaware that for many centuries slave-buying Muslims had taken comfort in precisely the same thought." Lewis mentions the unquestioning reiteration of "the notion that slavery is a divine boon to mankind, by which pagan and barbarous people are brought to Islam and civilization". In this respect, Islam, like Christianity, cannot disclaim a specific responsibility (over and above the mere continuation of an ancient practice) for the institution of slavery: the doctrine of the "one true religion" and the concomitant "lost souls of the unbelievers" constitutes a firm theological support for the enslavement of these unbelievers.

In 1444, Henry the Navigator bought the first black slaves from the Muslims, in exchange for some Muslim prisoners of war. After that, Muslims would go on furnishing black slaves to European slave-traders for centuries. At least 80% of all the black slaves that were ever exported from Black Africa, went through Muslim hands, and at least half of all exported black slaves in history never served anyone except Muslims. The slave trade in the Americas was not an invention of 1492, but an integration of European partners in the 800-years-old system of Islamic slave trade. In world history, Islam, the so-called religion of equality and brotherhood, is truly the champion of slavery.

4.16. Caste and the Hindu defeat

In a debate on the 1992 Supreme Court amendments to the Mandal proposals for caste-based reservations (shown in a *Newstrack* video), Ram Jethmalani said that the Hindus had been overpowered by a band of five or ten thousand invaders, simply because the Backward Castes did not care to defend their country. By implication, he grimly alleged that the Backward Caste people felt no loyalty to their country, and passively if not actively betrayed it, because it was merely the country of their hated Forward

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[128] Quoted in D.B. Davis: ***Slavery and Human Progress***, p.60.

Caste rulers.

Shortly after seeing this debate on video, I talked with the editor of a leading secularist daily. Between two sips of whisky, he declared that Hindus had been defeated by a mere 2,000 Muslim invaders because of their dividedness.

Those who might be impressed by the authority attached to these spokesmen's positions as top lawyer and top journalist, should remember that in India's English-speaking elite, 99% of the people is 100% illiterate about Indian history and culture. What they say about any Hindu-related subject, is more often than not miles off the mark.

The reality is that for five centuries, Muslim invaders in India either were swiftly repelled, or managed to get only a temporary foothold in border areas, or made short raids ending in retreat with heavy losses. Gandhara and the Makran coast were the only parts of India permanently lost to Islam by 1000 AD, and it took till 1192 before the Muslim invaders could overrun much of North India. Were there only 2,000 of them?

The army of Mahmud Ghaznavi, which sacked the Somnath temple before being thrown back with heavy losses, included 30,000 camels for carrying the water supplies alone. Mohammed Ghori, the actual conqueror of North India, had 120,000 cavalry. Controlling the conquered territory required even larger armies. According to contemporary sources, Alauddin Khilji had 475,000 horsemen under his command, Mohammed Tughlaq had 900,000. The Bahmani sultanate in Central India recruited many thousands of soldiers from the Muslim countries per year; when this inflow was interrupted because the control over the seas passed from Arab into Portuguese hands, the Bahmani sultanate collapsed.[129] The truth is that Islam could only conquer India by an immense military effort.

The conquest of India by Islam had taken centuries longer and required a far larger quantity of soldiers and weaponry than the conquest of West and Central Asia, North Africa and Spain. If social coherence is a factor of unassailability, then clearly India's social system was much better and satisfying than that of the countries to its west. It is simply not true that Indian society was less capable of putting up a defence against this merciless enemy.

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[129] Details of the military strength of the Muslim conquerors in K.S. Lal: "The army of the Sultanate", in *Journal of Indian History*, December 1977, p.85-110.

But was the social structure really a factor of much importance? Europe held out against the Islamic onslaught, but its feudal system could hardly be considered more egalitarian than the Indian caste system. Between Spain and France, there was little difference in social structure, but the former was conquered while the latter held out. Between the society which repelled Ghaznavi in 1000 AD and the society which was overrun by Ghori in 1192, there was also very little difference. Probably these social explanations for military defeats are your typical constructions by armchair theorizers unacquainted with military realities. And they are not consistent, for if we are to believe their own Aryan Invasion scenario, the thickly populated egalitarian civilization of Harappa was no match for the small bands of hierarchically organized Aryans: in that case at least, social superiority would not have prevented military inferiority.

The relevant difference between Hindu society and the forces of Islam was not a difference in social equality and justice, but a difference in military preparedness. One important military difference was that the Hindus used mostly infantry, very little cavalry. They did use elephants, but these were much less suited for warfare than horses. Even more important was the over-all military policy of the state. Unlike in the time of the Nanda and Maurya dynasties, when the state was centralized and had a large standing army, the medieval Hindu empires were decentralized states where the taxes providing the centre with the means to organize national defence were very low.

By contrast, the Islamic states were completely geared to warfare. War on the unbelievers was the central injunction of Islam (any sin is automatically forgiven to the *jihad* warrior), and this naturally shaped the character of the Islamic state. The Abbasid Caliphate, the Sultanates, and the Ottoman Caliphate all had large standing armies which in the long run only an equally militarized state could stand up to. To the extent possible, they also made sure to be up-to-date in armament and strategy. Thus, in the Turks' and Afghans' wars against the Rajputs, the stirrup made considerable difference in giving the Muslim warriors enough stability to shoot while riding. Babur was one of the first in South Asia to use cannon, and Abdali's victory in the third battle of Panipat (1761) was partly due to his superior artillery (and partly to the Maratha general's conceited neglect of the rules of strategy).

Granted that the ultimate victory of the Islamic invaders was not due to the "evils of Hindu society", some people might venture a second hypothesis: that the Backward Castes, once they got acquainted with Islamic rule, were positively impressed with its new egalitarian approach; and that for this reason, they easily converted to Islam. This theory was launched by Aligarh historian Mohammad Habib and is nowadays an obligatory belief in secularist circles.

Against this common belief, we maintain that the Backward Castes were even more tenacious in their resistance to Islam than the Forward Castes, that Islamic rule did not acquaint them with equality, and that conversions from among their ranks had an altogether different motive.

In an inscription, dated AD 1345, the Reddi dynasty of Andhra describes how after the elimination of the Kshatriya defenders, the duty of defending cows and Brahmins fell on the Shudras, "born of the feet of Vishnu". The first independent Reddi king, Vema, "restored all the agraharas of Brahmanas, which had been taken away by the wicked Mleccha kings". He was "a very Agastya to the ocean which was the Mlecchas".[130] Another inscription of the same dynasty proudly proclaims Vema's birth from "the victorious fourth varna", which "sprang from the feet of Vishnu", and which ruled "the remainder of the territory once ruled by the dwijas [before the Muslim conquest]", and describes how his first son Anna-Vota gave agraharas to the Brahmins and how his second son Anna-Vema freed the country of the "crowd of enemies" and used his wealth to sponsor the "men of learning".[131] The Shudras take it as a proud duty to defend the country against the Muslims and uphold the Brahminical culture.

In general, inscriptions of Shudra dynasties declare time and again that belonging to the fourth *varna* was a matter of pride. An inscription of Singaya-Nayaka (AD 1368) says: "The three castes, viz. Brahmanas and the next [= Kshatriyas and Vaishyas], were produced from the face, the arms and the thighs of the Lord; and for their support was born the fourth caste from His feet. That the latter caste is purer than the former [three] is self-evident; for this

[130] J. Ramayya: "Madras Museum plates of Vema", in *Epigraphia Indica*, vol.VIII (ASI reprint, 1981), p.9; v.9-12.

[131] E. Hultzsch: "Vanapalli plates of Anna-Vema", in *Epigraphia Indica*, vol.III (ASI reprint, 1979), p.64-65, v.5, 12, 16,20.

caste was born along with the river Ganga [which also springs from His feet], the purifier of the three worlds. The members of this caste are eagerly attentive to their duties, not wicked, pure-minded, and are devoid of passion and other such blemishes; they ably bear all the burden of the earth by helping those born in the kingly caste."[132] Another inscription relates how his relative Kapaya-Nayaka "rescued the Andhra country from the ravages of the Mohammedans".[133]

If it were true that the Shudras were so terribly oppressed by the Brahmins, we would expect them to take some kind of revenge upon coming to power, but the extant records indicate the contrary. And we would expect them to make common cause with the merciless Muslim persecuters of the Brahmins, but exactly the opposite is the case.

In the Mewat region south of Delhi, the Shudras led the unrelenting resistance against the Sultans, waging a guerrilla war from hide-outs in the forest. The Sultans had to clear away the forest before they could hunt down and forcibly convert a substantial part of this population. It is only in the last century that their islamization has reached below the surface, and that they made the area highly unsafe for Hindus. Like these Mewat Muslims, many of the most fanatical Muslims of today are descendants of forcibly converted resisters against the Islamic onslaught.

Apart from conversions by force, what were the motives and origins of converts? The lowest castes were certainly not the target group of Muslim proselytizers. The professional groups of Chamars, Bhangis, Chandalas etc. have remained almost exclusively Hindu. Till today, the Harijans are the first target of Muslim mobs in communal riots. When Rajputs or Yadavs maltreat them, it is called "atrocities on Harijans", but the far more numerous Harijan victims of Muslim attacks are drowned in the cover-up language of "communal riot" reporting, in which the victims get the blame, or remain unidentified by community. The tribals too have retained an inveterate aversion for the Muslims.

The upper castes were a more fruitful recruiting-ground. Most important was the induction of Hindu women in harems (or smaller-scale marriages), forcible or otherwise. Their children grew

[132] K. Rama Sastri: "Akkalapundi grant of Singaya-Nayaka: Saka-Samvat 1290", *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XIII (ASI reprint, 1982), p.259 ff., v.5-7.

[133] *ibid.*, quoted on p.261.

up as Muslims. Till today, the effective conversion upon marriage with a Muslim, man or woman, remains one of the most successful methods of increasing the Muslim and decreasing the non-Muslim share in the population.

The power-oriented sections of the upper castes yielded a fair number of careerist conversions. In order to gain acceptance as genuine Muslims, they often turned into zealous persecuters, as exemplified by Malik Kafur. What attracted these people to Islam was not its fabled equality, but its stark inequality: between Muslim rulers and non-Muslim subjects.

The non-untouchable Shudra castes were the numerically most important source of "voluntary" converts, simply because they were more numerous to start with. Mostly, material and social pressure, related to avenues of employment, provided the incentive for conversion. Artists and artisans in the employ of courts and elite families were under strong pressure to become Muslims, a well-known example being the musicians. When Muslims play Hindu classical music, some secularist nincompoop will start praising the "contribution of Islam to our rich composite culture" (as opposed to the case when caste practices are shown to exist within the Muslim community: then it is called "a Hindu hold-over for which Islam cannot be blamed"), but in fact, these are Hindu castes who had to take on Muslim names because the Hindu patrons had been removed and only Muslim rulers could provide employment.

Looking for the explanation of Islamic successes in the "evils of Hindu society" is historically unwarranted, but the attempt can be understood as a normal phenomenon in the psychology of defeat. Many rape victims develop doubts whether they themselves are not somehow to blame for what happened to them. The rationality behind this psychological mechanism is that one seeks to exorcise the defeat by situating its cause, and therefore also its future remedy, in an area which one can control, viz. in one's own household.

Still, the collective Hindu self-reproach would not have taken place on a substantial scale if it had not been promoted by outside forces. Because the Hindu armies were defeated, Hindu society could be dissected by guilt-mongers and declared to be the pinnacle of injustice. And because Islamic armies were victorious, Islamic doctrine and Muslim society were glorified. Now that Islamic rule is no more there to impose a rosy picture of Islam, it is high

time to restore the honour of Hindu society as a comparatively humane society which had the necessary cohesion and appropriate structure to survive and ultimately repel Islamic aggression, and to survive the sustained propaganda war waged by Christian and Communist agitators.

It is remarkable that the worst anti-Hindu and anti-Brahmin policies and propaganda in recent decades have been the doings of Brahmins, and at least of upper caste people. The origin of this phenomenon lies in the fact that sections of the upper castes have guzzled down heavy doses of anti-Hindu thought during their close collaboration with the Muslim and British rulers. While a few thinkers of Vaishya and Kayasth background (Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi) have taken up their defence, Brahmins like Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N. Roy, S.A. Dange, E.M.S. Namboodripad, etc. have gone all out to blacken their own caste and the entire culture which it sustained and preserved. Brahmins had been made destitute by the Islamic onslaught. They were the first and the largest in number to take to English education which promised them jobs. They got the jobs, but were brain-washed by Western education, and turned against their own society and culture. Later on, when the thought-fashion changed in the West, they formed the major element in the leadership of the Communist movement in India. Till today, the list of vocal secularist intellectuals shows an astounding over-representation of Sharmas, Pandeys and Bhattacharyas. Shall we call it another wily Brahminical conspiracy to monopolize all power positions in the secularist set-up?

It seems that, like in the Middle Ages, the Shudras have a crucial role to play in assuring a future to Hindu society. The stand taken by Kalyan Singh, the "Backward" Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, in removing the Babri Masjid and preparing the way for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir, gives a taste of things to come. Unlike most of the Forwards in his party, he stood firm and showed a natural pride in what was accomplished on 6 December 1992. While the Forwards were talking slogans about being proud of being Hindu, the Backwards just did it.

4.17. Conclusion

Except for a few utopian crank movements which wanted to create equality overnight in the context of a theocratic state, the abolition of inequality in lay society was not among the goals of

any of the world's great religions. Equality is typically a modern programme, and religions that have their roots in tribal, slave-holding or feudal societies are trying to fool the public when they claim to have inherited equality as one of the goals laid down by their founders. Hindu society has not sinned more gravely than other societies in incorporating and maintaining age-old systems of endogamy and hereditary inequality. At worst, Hinduism is historically one step behind modern Christianity, which has grown accustomed to the idea of social equality thanks to the anti-Christian ideology of the French Revolution, but it is not intrinsically more guilty of the newly-created sin of inequality than Christianity or Islam.

This does not mean that caste as an institution can be defended in the modern age: Hindu reform organizations like the Arya Samaj, Hindu leaders like Veer Savarkar, Hindu movements like the Freedom Movement were right in choosing to leave this particular form of inequality behind. Just like Christians have been forced to abandon their long-standing opposition to democracy and pluralism, so the feudal-type varna ideology and the tribal division in endogamous jatis and exogamous gotras need not be upheld by Hinduism, and it is being shedded voluntarily. It has been, but is no longer, a useful formula for giving Hindu culture a foundation in social reality.

While society is going its way, scholarship has the duty to give an accurate account of the historical role of the caste system. Pointing at its inherent inequality, modern propagandists hostile to Hinduism claim that "India has paid a terrible price for its caste system". They would not be saying that if they had not been Hindu society's declared enemies. The price which Hindu society has paid for having this decentralized caste structure, is that it has survived Islamic and Christian assaults and occupations where other societies have disappeared or lost their identity and traditions. This way, it has had to fight and suffer endless physical attacks and calumny, which is a heavy price indeed, but one worth paying when the preservation of *Sanatana Dharma* is at stake.

As topics for research in social history, I suggest that the role which Islamic rule has played in the hardening of caste relations and the aggravation of untouchability should be studied more closely. So also the perversion of the caste system in the recent period, from a harmony model to a conflict model, partly through

unintended effects of the colonial and post-colonial dispensationand, partly through the wilful aggravation of this process on the part of, firstly, external parties like the Christian missionaries, and secondly, internal forces which have discovered profitable opportunities in divisive casteist politics. These are tasks before an emerging Hindu scholarship: by this I do not mean distortive scholarship seeking to lend academic authority to preconceived ideological positions, like Communist scholarship has done; but scholarship which applies the proper scientific method to topics on which it would be particularly profitable for Hindu society to know the truth.

FIVE

DR. AMBEDKAR: A TRUE ARYAN

5.1. A sincere patriot

"Nothing is infallible. Nothing is binding forever. Everything is subject to inquiry and examination." That insight is one of the things which Dr. Ambedkar sums up as the good points in Buddhism.[1] It is unfortunate that those who invoke the name of *Bharat Ratna* Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar (and that means by now nearly the entire political spectrum), do not apply this dictum to their hero's own work. Dr. Ambedkar has become a saint, and his opinions can now only be recited and quoted as final authority, but not subjected to any criticism on penalty of being dubbed "Brahminical reactionary".

Here, we do want to take a brief critical look at a few aspects of Dr. Ambedkar's work. We may, nonetheless, start by joining the chorus and declaring that Dr. Ambedkar was doubtlessly a great man. If we compare him with, for instance, Jawaharlal Nehru, we notice that Dr. Ambedkar was a man of principles, a man with a spine, a true patriot, a realist, a loyal shepherd of his community, a scholar in his own right, a man for whom words had a definite meaning.

Dr. Ambedkar has rendered great services both to his own community and to the nation as a whole. His specific role in the social and political progress of the Untouchables is his main claim to fame, at least if you read what is being said and written about him today. But he was also the Law Minister who piloted the Constitution through the committees and plenum sessions of the Constituent Assembly. It is exaggerated to call him the "father of the Constitution" and the "modern Manu", but his capable and realistic leadership has undeniably played a crucial role. He stepped down as Law Minister prematurely, mostly because of his dissatisfaction with the disrespectful and authoritarian working-style of India's "non-violent Stalin", Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He spent the remaining years of his life on political work for the Untouchables, and on the preparations for the mass conversion of Untouchables to Buddhism.

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[1] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.3 (Gvt. of Maharashtra, 1987), p.442.

Dr. Ambedkar was a sincere patriot. He had a lively concern for the well-being and safety of India. For instance, while Nehru stopped the army from reconquering all of Kashmir and allowed the Chinese to overrun Tibet, all in his mindless *Hindu-Muslim-bhai-bhai* and *Hindi-Chini-bhai-bhai* euphoria, Dr. Ambedkar saw the danger of Islamic and Communist aggression clearly, and even suggested that India join the pro-Western SEATO (South-East-Asian Treaty Organization): "The Prime Minister has practically helped the Chinese to bring their border down to the Indian border. Looking at all these things, it would be an act of levity not to believe that India, if it is not exposed to aggression right now, is exposed to aggression and that aggression might well be committed by people who are always in the habit of committing aggression."[2]

In 1954, when Nehru was wilfully being fooled by the Chinese who were silently occupying Aksai Chin, Dr. Ambedkar said in an election speech in Nagpur that "Nehru's foreign policy had made India a friendless country, that Nehru had bungled the Kashmir issue and had sheltered men who were dishonest, and that India was encircled by a kind of United States of Islam on one side and on the other side Russia and China in a combination for the conquest of Asia."[3] That he was proven right on this score in 1962 and 1965, is hardly even mentioned in the floral tributes which are so often paid to Dr. Ambedkar.

Because he was a sincere patriot, he rejected the eager offers of Muslim and Christian missionaries to lead the Depressed Castes in mass conversion to one of those two faiths. Today, less sincere people are trying to sell Islam in Ambedkar's name, others try to sell Christianity in Ambedkar's name, but fact is that Ambedkar himself firmly rejected those options. One reason for his embracing Buddhism was that he wanted a rational and humanist religion, for which the bizarre beliefs of Christianity and Islam did not qualify. Another reason was that this was an indigenous religion which would not bring with it extra-territorial loyalties. He has explained: "I will choose only the least harmful way for the country. And that is the greatest benefit I am conferring on the country by embracing Buddhism; for Buddhism is a part and parcel of *Bharatiya* culture. I have taken care that my conversion will not harm the tradition of the culture and history of this land."[4]

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[2] Quoted in Dhananjay Keer: *Ambedkar*, p.455.
[3] *ibid.*, p.453.
[4] *ibid.*, p.498.

The neo-Buddhist movement is continuing, and it keeps on attracting Dalits and others, in substantial though not spectacular numbers. On the other hand, many agitators are claiming Dr. Ambedkar's heritage but use it in the service of predatory and irrational religions. The ideological distance between the patriotic Buddhist Ambedkar and these self-styled Ambedkarites of today, who are anti-national and pro-Islamic or pro-Christian, is even greater than that between the Hindu Mahatma Gandhi and the present-day Hindu-baiting Gandhians.

5.2. Ambedkar on Islam

Unlike Jawaharlal Nehru, who was full of blind praise for anti-national forces, Dr. Ambedkar did retain the capacity to take a cool and hard look at the enemies of Hindu society, even while being bitterly critical of the same, and having been much less pampered by it than Nehru. About Islam, he was particularly outspoken, esp. in his book *Pakistan or the Partition of India*. According to his biographer Dhananjay Keer, "some penetrating and caustic paragraphs were deleted, it is said, at the instance of Ambedkar's close admirers" for the sake of his own safety; but what remains is still impressive.[5]

For instance, he utterly rejected the notion, now spread by "Ambedkarites" like V.T. Rajshekar, that Islamic society is more egalitarian or in other ways better than Hindu society. After giving Miss Mayo's book of anti-Hindu vilification, *Mother India*, the credit for "exposing the evils [of Hindu society]", he observes that "it created the unfortunate impression throughout the world that while the Hindus were grovelling in the mud of these social evils and were conservative, the Muslims were free from them, and as compared to the Hindus were a progressive people."[6] And then he enumerates all the social evils in Hindu society, and finds that they are generally also present in Muslim society, sometimes to a worse extent: child marriage, several forms of oppression of women, several forms of social inequality.

About the institution of slavery in Islam, Dr. Ambedkar quotes with approval from a book by John J. Pool, which after listing some Koran statements permitting slavery, concludes: "Thus the Koran,

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[5] *ibid.*, p.334.
[6] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.8, p.225 ff.

in this matter of slavery, is the enemy of mankind."[7] The colonial powers have abolished slavery, but, observes Dr. Ambedkar, "while it existed, much of its support was derived from Islam", because: "While the prescriptions by the Prophet regarding the just and humane treatment of slaves contained in the Koran are praiseworthy, there is nothing whatever in Islam that lends support to the abolition of this curse."

Islam also has its own caste system. Dr. Ambedkar quotes the Superintendent of the 1901 Census with approval: "The Mohammedans themselves recognize two main social divisions, 1) *Ashraf* or *Sharaf* and 2) *Ajlaf*. *Ashraf* means 'noble' and includes all undoubted descendants of foreigners and converts from high caste Hindus. All other Mohammedans, including all occupational groups and all converts of lower ranks are known by the contemptuous terms *Ajlaf*, 'wretches' or 'mean people'... In some places a third class, called *Arzal* or 'lowest of all' is added. With them no other Mohammedan would associate, and they are forbidden to enter the mosque [and] to use the public burial ground. Within these groups there are castes with social precedence of exactly the same nature as one finds among the Hindus."[8]

For all his bitterness against Hindu society, Dr. Ambedkar's verdict on Muslim society is even harder: "There can thus be no manner of doubt that the Muslim society in India is afflicted by the same social evils as aflict the Hindu society. Indeed, the Muslims have all the social evils of the Hindus and something more. That something more is the compulsory system of *purdah* for Muslim women."[9] And then he sums up all the negative effects and side-effects of the *purdah* ("curtain", seclusion) system.

Worse than the existence of social evils among the Muslims is, in Dr. Ambedkar's diagnosis, the lack of any attempt, even any intention, to reform their society: "The Hindus have their social evils. But there is one relieving feature about them — namely that some of them are conscious of their existence and a few of them are actively agitating for their removal. The Muslims, on the other hand, do not realize that they are evils and consequently do not agitate for their removal."[10]

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[7] *ibid.*, p.228, with reference to J.J. Pool: *Studies in Mohammedanism*, p.34-35.
[8] *ibid.*, p.229.
[9] *ibid.*, p.230.
[10] *ibid.*, p.233.

Dr. Ambedkar also addresses the question why the Muslims are opposed to reform: "The usual answer given is that the Muslims all over the world are an unprogressive people. This view no doubt accords with the facts of history. After the first spurts of their activity... the Muslims suddenly fell into a strange condition of torpor, from which they never seem to have become awake. The cause assigned for this torpor... is said to be the fundamental assumption made by all Muslims that Islam is a world religion, suitable for all people, for all times and all conditions."

Dr. Ambedkar quotes an unnamed source saying: "It is indeed one of the salient features of Islam that it immobilizes in their native barbarism the races whom it enslaves."[11] Unfortunately, neither he nor his sources say explicitly why Islam of necessity immobilizes all initiative and free thinking: because the Koran is believed to be God's final revelation, complete and valid till Judgment Day. The belief that Islam is "suitable for all people, for all times and all conditions" is not just an odd conceit, but is inherent in the most fundamental doctrine of Islam.

Dr. Ambedkar describes the dominant opinion that Islam imposes a uniformity of thought, and that "this uniformity is deadening and is not merely imparted to Muslims but is imposed upon them by a spirit of intolerance which is unknown anywhere outside the Muslim world for its severity and its violence and which is directed towards the suppression of all rational thinking which is in conflict with the teachings of Islam."[12]

However, against this competent opinion he sees the (then recent) developments in the Muslim countries, especially Turkey, where radical social reform has been imposed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: "If Islam has not come in the way of these countries, why should it come in the way of the Muslims of India?" At this point, Dr. Ambedkar is wrongly informed. The revolutionary reforms in Turkey, and the milder reforms in Iran, had been carried through *against* Islam (which is "a stinking corpse hindering all progress", according to Atatürk), against the opposition of the official guardians of Islamic orthodoxy. Islam did stand in the way of progress in those countries. But it was so weakened, and the secular nationalist leaders were so determined, that Islamic opposition to progress

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[11] *ibid.*, p.234.

[12] *ibid.*, p.234, followed by a lengthy quote from Renan (*Nationality and other Essays*) to the same effect, but harder.

remained ineffectual.

Dr. Ambedkar goes on to develop the argument that the minority position of the Muslims in India is a factor in making them defensive and unwilling to reform: "Their energies are directed to maintaining a constant struggle against the Hindus for seats and posts, in which there is no time, no thought and no room for questions relating to social reform."[13] Of course, that is correct, though it can by no means neutralize the more fundamental reason for Islam's opposition to change in its God-given laws and customs. Today, we know that Pakistan, where Muslims are not in a minority, has even more retrograde laws than the Indian Muslims have ever demanded. So, the Muslims' minority position can only have been a factor of secondary importance.

This then is Dr. Ambedkar's conclusion about the reason for Muslim unwillingness to reform: "The Muslims think that the Hindus and Muslims must perpetually struggle... that in this struggle the strong will win, and that to ensure strength they must suppress or put in cold storage everything which causes dissension in their ranks."[14]

Dr. Ambedkar adds that the communal conflict which has increasingly characterized Hindu-Muslim relations, has also led to a stagnation in the Hindus' efforts at reform, notably in the Hindu Mahasabha. In the case of Congress, it was another struggle that had taken all energy out of the efforts at reform (which had been so prominent a concern around the turn of the century), viz. the struggle against the British. In all tirades by Ambedkarites against Hindu society's observed slackness at social reform, this effect of the pre-occupation with other matters should be borne in mind (as is done so charitably in the case of the Muslims, not only by Dr. Ambedkar but also by present-day secularists).

With that, we have touched the major topic of Dr. Ambedkar's study of the Muslim problem, *Pakistan or the Partition of India* (published in 1940): the communal conflict. He observes: "The Muslim's spirit of aggression is his native endowment and is ancient as compared with that of the Hindu. It is not that the Hindu, if given time, will not pick up and overtake the Muslim. But as matters stand today, the Muslim in this exhibition of the spirit of aggression leaves the Hindu far behind."[15]

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[13] *ibid.*, p.235.
[14] *ibid.*, p.237.
[15] *ibid.*, p.249.

Dr. Ambedkar distinguishes three forms of "political aggression of the Muslims":

1. "The ever-growing catalogue of the Muslims' political demands". Follows a list of demands followed by agreements followed by increased demands, from 1892 till 1932.
2. "The spirit of exploiting the weaknesses of the Hindus". This means that "if the Hindus object to anything, the Muslim policy seems to be to insist upon it and give it up only when the Hindus show themselves ready to offer a price for it by giving the Muslims some other concessions".
3. "The adoption by the Muslims of the gangster's method in politics". Dr. Ambedkar explains: "The riots are a sufficient indication that gangsterism has become a settled part of their strategy in politics. They seem to be consciously and deliberately imitating the Sudeten Germans in the means employed by them against the Czechs."[16]

Dr. Ambedkar describes how the Muslims had been showered with concessions at the Round Table Conference in 1932, and how that was only the starting-point of a new series of demands, such as the choice of Urdu as sole official language, the unlimited freedom to perform cow-slaughter, recognition of the Muslim League as sole representative of the Muslims, inducement of the Muslim League in all the provincial governments, constitutional imposition of more than proportional job reservations for the Muslims in army and administration, Muslim representation at all levels through separate electorates, and finally "a 50% share in everything".[17]

Dr. Ambedkar comments: "In this catalogue of new demands, there are some which on the face of them are extravagant and impossible, if not irresponsible. As an instance, one may refer to the demand for fifty-fifty... In 1929 the Muslims insisted [in the context of Bengal and Punjab] that in allotting seats in Legislatures, a majority shall not be reduced to a minority or equality. This principle, enunciated by themselves, it is now demanded, shall be abandoned and a majority shall be reduced to equality... With this new demand, the Muslims are not only seeking to reduce the Hindu majority to a minority, but they are also cutting into the po-

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[16] *ibid.*, p.269. A footnote explains: "In the Karachi session of the All-India Muslim League both Mr. Jinnah and Sir Abdullah Haroon compared the Muslims of India [as] the 'Sudeten' of the Muslim world and capable of doing what the Sudeten Germans did to Czechoslovakia."

[17] *ibid.*, p.263-264.

litical rights of the other minorities. The Muslims are now speaking the language of Hitler and claiming a place in the sun as Hitler had been doing for Germany. For their demand of 50% is nothing but a counterpart of the German claims for *Deutschland über Alles* and *Lebensraum* for themselves..."[18]

Dr. Ambedkar also deals with the social aggression by the Muslims, and he gives a lengthy survey of the communal riots they started in the years 1920-1940 (meaning the spontaneous riots, as opposed to the riots orchestrated by politicians).[19]

Formally, this list of riots and Muslim atrocities against Hindus serves as illustration to his critique of Mahatma Gandhi's policy of Hindu-Muslim unity at all cost.[20] He makes a bitter and almost sarcastic indictment of the Mahatma's absent or anomalous or contradictory reactions to Muslim attacks on Hindus, and to the Mahatma's unwillingness to make any change in his policy in response to the feedback he was getting from reality. In style and contents, it resembles Nathuram Godse's critique of Gandhi's policies (formulated in the speech which he, as the prime accused, held during the Mahatma Gandhi murder trial).[21] One didn't have to be a Hindu fanatic to notice that Hindu-Muslim unity wasn't working.

One of his allegations against Gandhiji is this: "He has never called the Muslims to account even when they have been guilty of gross crimes against Hindus." Dr. Ambedkar cites, among other examples (like the Moplah rebellion), the series of murders of people who had criticized Mohammed and the Quran: Swami Shraddhananda, "who was shot by Abdul Rashid on 23 December 1926 when he was lying in his sick bed"; Lala Nanakchand, a prominent Arya Samajist; Rajpal, the editor of the book *Rangila Rasool* (gossip on Prophet Mohammed's sex life, in reaction to a scurrilous Muslim publication on Sita), "stabbed by Ilamdin on 6th April 1929 while sitting in his shop"; Nathuramal Sharma, "murdered by Abdul Qayum in September 1934... in the Court of the Judicial

[18] *ibid.*, p.264.
[19] *ibid.*, p.162-184.
[20] *ibid.*, p.146-162.
[21] Nathuram Godse's speech was published as *May it Please Your Honour*, Surya Prakashan, 1989 (1977 first publication of the original English text). Godse's family claims that Dr. Ambedkar, then Law Minister, was not unsympathetic to Godse, and had asked through the lawyers "if there is anything I can do for you", meaning commutation of the expected death sentence into lifelong imprisonment. Godse, according to the same source, replied that on the contrary, the minister should ensure that he get nothing but the death sentence.

Commissioner of Sind where he was seated while awaiting the hearing of his appeal against his conviction under Section 195, Indian Penal Code, for the publication of a pamphlet on the history of Islam".[22] That is "only a short list, and could easily be expanded".

Dr. Ambedkar points out that, while the murderers were tried by British judges, the Muslim leadership gave its full moral support to the murderers: "The leading Muslims, however, never condemned these criminals. On the contrary, they were hailed as religious martyrs... Mr. Barkat Alli, a barrister of Lahore, who argued the appeal of Abdul Qayum... went to the length of saying that Qayum was not guilty of murder of Nathuramal because his act was justifiable by the law of the Koran.[23] This attitude of the Muslims is quite understandable. What is not understandable is the attitude of Mr. Gandhi."

The Mahatma has often been accused of Muslim appeasement. Dr. Ambedkar makes that criticism his own: "Mr. Gandhi has been very punctilious in the matter of condemning any and every act of violence... But Mr. Gandhi has never protested against such murders. Not only have the Mussalmans never condemned these outrages, but even Mr. Gandhi has never called upon the leading Muslims to condemn them. He has kept silent over them. Such an attitude can only be explained on the ground that Mr. Gandhi was anxious to preserve Hindu-Muslim unity and did not mind the murders of a few Hindus, if it could be achieved by sacrificing their lives."

Dr. Ambedkar quotes an editorial of the Congress paper *Hindustan*, which draws some lessons from the unrelenting communal

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[22] id., p.156. Earlier murders of this kind included that of Pandit Lekh Ram. In 1991 the Japanese translator of the *Satanic Verses* was stabbed to death, in 1992 the Egyptian modernist critic Farag Foda was shot. In countries like Iran and Pakistan, the death penalty is given to people convicted of "blasphemy", while the Egyptian writer Alaa Hamid and his publisher and printer came off with "only" 8 years imprisonment. The execution of Dara Shikoh by his brother Aurangzeb was also on charges of blasphemy (putting the Upanishads on a par with the Quran). In independent India, prosecutions under Section 195 IPC still occur, and usually involve banning the offending publication.

[23] Mohammed himself had several poets who had criticized and satirized him, stabbed to death by assassins. On chasing the Jews from Khaybar, he first singled out some well-known critics for punishment. On entering Mecca, which surrendered on condition that no one who refrained from armed resistance would be troubled, he rounded up a number of well-known critics for execution. This authoritative example set by Mohammed himself explains the Salman Rushdie affair and related murder attempts.

violence: "To talk about Hindu-Muslim unity from a thousand platforms or to give it blazoning headlines is to perpetrate an illusion whose cloudy structure dissolves itself at the exchange of brickbats and the desecration of tombs and temples."[24] And he comments: "Nothing I could say can so well show the futility of Hindu-Muslim unity. Hindu-Muslim unity upto now was at least in sight although it was like a mirage. Today it is out of sight and also out of mind."

Dr. Ambedkar quotes a number of statements by Muslim political and religious leaders showing that Hindu-Muslim co-existence in one independent state is impossible because the Muslims will settle for nothing less than to be the rulers. For instance, Maulana Azad Sobhani is quoted as saying, with a typical pan-Islamic outlook: "Our big fight is with the 22 crores of our Hindu enemies, who constitute the majority... if they become powerful, then these Hindus will swallow Muslim India and gradually even Egypt, Turkey, Kabul, Mecca... So it is the essential duty of every devout Muslim to fight on by joining the Muslim League so that the Hindus may not be established here and a Muslim rule may be established in India as soon as the English depart."[25]

Dr. Ambedkar also quotes a few statements by Hindus who are apprehensive that independence will inevitably lead to a struggle with the Muslims, because Islamic scripture imposes on them the duty to establish Muslim rule in the entire world, especially in countries which they had already ruled once.[26] For instance, Mrs. Annie Besant has said: "It has been one of the many injuries inflicted on India by the encouragement of the Khilafat crusade, that the inner Muslim feeling of hatred against 'unbelievers' has sprung up, naked and unashamed... We have seen revived, as guide in practical politics, the old Muslim religion of the sword,... In thinking of an independent India, the menace of Mohammedan rule has to be considered."[27] Lala Lajpat Rai is quoted as writing about Hindu-Mohammedan unity: "I have devoted most of my time during the last six months to the study of Muslim history and Muslim law and I am inclined to think, it is neither possible nor practicable... I am also fully prepared to trust the Muslim leaders, but

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[24] *ibid.*, p.186.

[25] *ibid.*, p.273, with reference to Azad Sobhani's speech published in the *Anand Bazar Patrika*.

[26] *ibid.*, p.274-276.

[27] *ibid.*, p.274-275, with reference to her *The Future of Indian Politics*, pp.301-305.

what about the Quran and the Hadis? The leaders cannot override them."[28]

So, Dr. Ambedkar was aware of the profound causes of Muslim hostility to Hindus and to co-existence within a non-Islamic state. Though he had not studied Islamic theology and was consequently unable to trace Islamic fanaticism to its source, he was an honest observer of past and contemporary history, and refused to fool himself about the incurable character of Islam. He totally rejected the facile explanation, sold today by the entire secularist establishment, that the cause of the communal problem could be found in British "divide and rule" policies: "The Hindus say that the British policy of 'divide and rule' is the real cause of this failure [of Hindu-Muslim unity]... But time has come to discard the facile explanation so dear to the Hindus... What stands between the Hindus and Muslims is not a mere matter of difference, and this antagonism is not to be attributed to material causes. It is formed by causes which take their origin in historical, religious, cultural and social antipathy, of which political antipathy is only a reflection."[29] That is not yet a sufficient analysis of Muslim separatism, but it is a recognition of the intrinsic hostility between Islam and Hinduism, as opposed to the accidental effects of British divisive ploys.

Dr. Ambedkar effectively accepted the two-nation theory: Hindus and Muslims are so different in many cultural respects, and their political wills are so divergent, that it is not desirable to force them to live together in one state. So, the principle of a separate Muslim state should be conceded.

Among the non-Muslim leaders, Dr. Ambedkar was probably the only one who accepted the Partition of India before the power shift (to the League's advantage) and the bloody events of the 1940s nearly forced the acceptance of Partition on India's political class. The Hindu Mahasabha equally accepted a version of the two-nation theory (in Veer Savarkar's words, Hindus have India as their "fatherland and holyland", unlike the Muslims), but nonetheless insisted on maintaining the unity of India. The Indian National Congress rejected the two-nation theory and built its demand for a united India on the vanishing dream of Hindu-Muslim unity.

In a lengthy chapter, Dr. Ambedkar argues that neither Savar-

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[28] *ibid.*, p.275-276, with reference to his letter to C.R. Das, published in *Life of Savarkar* by Indra Prakash.

[29] *ibid.*, p.328-329.

kar nor Mahatma Gandhi had a solution for the problem that Muslims are unwilling to live in peace as a minority in a secular state.[30] He even says that suppression of a minority (which, according to Dr. Ambedkar, was *not* the intention of Veer Savarkar, who is constantly accused of just that till today), of which "the aim is to bring into being one nation", is preferable to having two distinct nations living together in one state.[31] He rejects Savarkar's vision of two nations living in one Hindusthan as dangerous and unworkable. For the "irregular" and "vague" views of the Congress, with its denial of the plain fact that Hindus and Muslims function as separate nations, Dr. Ambedkar has nothing but contempt.

Dr. Ambedkar advocates Partition, and is consistent in this demand. If the reason for Partition is that two distinct nations cannot live together, then it is undesirable that the two new states retain minorities belonging to the nation for which the other state was founded. Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar advocates an exchange of population. He still leaves open the possibility that many Hindus in Pakistan and many Muslims in India will prefer to stay on, but with an eye on the succesful exchange of population between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey after the collapse of the Ottoman empire, he proposes a practical outline for organizing such an exchange of population. Thus, legal instruments have to be created to transfer reasonable property rights of migrants, pension rights etc.[32] Instead of moaning that such an exchange would be unfeasible or a renouncement of the Congress dream of Hindu-Muslim unity, Dr. Ambedkar just sits down to work out in detail how it is to be done.

The contrast between Ambedkar's and the Congress leadership's attitude towards Partition is striking. Ambedkar faced the inevitability of Partition at least from the moment the Muslim League had decided to work for it. Gandhi and Nehru kept on exhausting themselves till the last in all kinds of unequal compromises and shameful concessions in order to avoid the inevitable. Ambedkar prepared for an equal deal among grown people, Gandhi and Nehru allowed themselves to be forced into submission by the Muslim bully's insistent battering. Ambedkar proposed a clean and consistent settlement, Gandhi and Nehru refused to give up their shattered rhetoric of Hindu-Muslim unity and op-

[30] *ibid.*, p.129-194.
[31] *ibid.*, p.144.
[32] *ibid.*, p.379-384.

posed the logical consequence of population exchange even after having effectively swallowed the two-nation theory and the Partition of India.

The Congress leaders opposed the exchange of population, and they refused to organize it. Nonetheless, in 1947 at least a partial exchange took place anyway, but with an estimated 6 lakh people killed on the road. Part of the responsibility rests with the Congress' unrealistic refusal to co-operate with the inevitable. Moreover, in one direction the "exchange" would continue at a slower pace: the Hindus have been leaving Pakistan and Bangla Desh, which are effectively becoming mono-religious states. At the same time, the Muslim minority in India has been making such demands and creating such trouble, that today there can be no doubt about which was the wisest option: a completed Partition which would settle the entire "two nations" each in their own state.

After Partition the Scheduled Caste politician Jogendranath Mandal was given a seat in the Pakistani cabinet, as a showboy to lure the Scheduled Castes into converting to Islam. It was a bitter disappointment for Mandal, to which he gave expression by stepping down.

Dhananjay Keer reports on this episode and on Dr. Ambedkar's reaction: "Jogendranath Mandal... who had asked the Scheduled Castes in Pakistan to look upon Jinnah as their saviour and had even asked them to wear a badge blatantly suggestive of Islamic associations, was now rudely shaken from his dream... Ambedkar was terribly upset, and he issued a statement denouncing the Pakistani government. He complained that the Scheduled Castes were not allowed to come to Hindustan and that they were being forcibly converted to Islam. He further said that in the Hyderabad state too, they were being forcibly converted to Islam in order to increase the strength of the Muslim population in the Hyderabad state. He therefore advised his people: 'I would like to tell the Schedule Castes who happen today to be impounded inside Pakistan to come over to India by such means as may be available to them. The second thing I want to say is that it would be fatal for the Scheduled Castes, whether in Pakistan or in Hyderabad, to put their faith in Muslims or the Muslim League. It has become a habit with the Scheduled Castes to look upon the Muslims as their friends simply because they dislike the Hindus. This is a mistaken view.' Ambedkar further asked the Scheduled Castes in Pakistan and

Hyderabad not to succumb to conversion to Islam as an easy way of escape; and to all those who were forcibly converted to Islam he pledged his word that he would see that they were received back into the fold... Whatever the oppression and tyranny that the Hindus practised on them, he asserted, it should not warp their vision and swerve them from their duty. He warned the Scheduled Castes in Hyderabad not to side with the Nizam and bring disgrace upon the community by siding with one who was the enemy of India."[33]

Dr. Ambedkar also rejected Islam because it had destroyed Buddhism in India and other countries. Many present-day Ambedkarites never tire of quoting this rather disputable line: "The history of India is nothing but a history of a mortal conflict between Buddhism and Brahmanism."[34] But Dr. Ambedkar has also, and very accurately, written: "There can be no doubt that the fall of Buddhism was due to the invasions of the Muslims."[35]

Referring to the Persian word for "idol", *but*, derived from *Buddha*, Dr. Ambedkar observes: "Thus the origin of the word indicates that in the Muslim mind idol worship had come to be identified with the religion of Buddha. To the Muslims they were one and the same thing. The mission to break idols thus became the mission to destroy Buddhism. Islam destroyed Buddhism not only in India but wherever it went. Bactria, Parthia, Afghanistan, Gandhara and Chinese Turkestan... in all these countries Islam destroyed Buddhism."[36] More precisely: "The Muslim invaders sacked the Buddhist universities of Nalanda [etc.]... They razed to the ground Buddhist monasteries with which the country was studded. The monks fled away in thousands... A very large number were killed outright by the Muslim commanders."[37]

Short, the pro-Islamic orientation which agitators like V.T. Rajshekar want to give to the Ambedkarite movement, is not at all in consonance with Dr. Ambedkar's own view of Islam. In fact, many of Dr. Ambedkar's observations on Islam would now be

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[33] Dh. Keer: *Ambedkar*, p.399, with reference to *The Free Press Journal*, 28/11/1947.

[34] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.3, p.267 (in the chapter: "The triumph of Brahminism: regicide or the birth of counter-revolution"). To this sweeping statement, however, he adds: "So neglected is this truth that no one will be found to give it his ready acceptance." In fact, this non-acceptance need not be a sign of neglect.

[35] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.3, p.229 (in the chapter "The decline and fall of Buddhism").

[36] *ibid.*, p.229-230.

[37] *ibid.*, p.232.

branded as "Hindu communalist" by the very people who claim his heritage.

5.3. Dr. Ambedkar on caste and race

Dr. Ambedkar has, naturally, written a lot about the genesis and history of the caste system. As we shall see, his work on the origin of caste is of uneven quality. However, some of his general positions are certainly commendable.

First of all, Dr. Ambedkar rejected what we could call the conspiracy theory of caste, esp. the belief that caste was cunningly and maliciously imposed on Indian society by the machinations of the sly Brahmins. This was the view fed to Jotirao Phule by the missionaries, and is nowadays the most popular and politically exploited belief about caste.

The conspiracy theory of caste is a variation on the pop-Marxist view of religion as "opium for the people". Marx saw religion as a genuine reflection (though a mistaken belief) of people's actual condition: without needing outside inspiration, the common people themselves would create religion as a source of consolation for their misery. But his followers saw it as "opium *for* the people", a false belief system concocted by exploiters who sat down one day, thought of a way to fool the people into submissiveness, and then improvised the Bible, or the Veda etc., which they fed to these unbelievably gullible masses. In this view, sly exploiters could make the millions accept a religion which they had hitherto not known nor needed, and similarly, the sly Brahmins (esp. the law-giver Manu) could make the millions adopt a rigorous and all-encompassing system of practices which they had not known nor needed and which moreover went against their own interests.

In his paper *Caste in India*, Ambedkar wrote: "One thing I want to impress upon you is that Manu did not *give the law* of caste and that he could not do so. Caste existed long before Manu. He was an upholder of it and therefore philosophized about it, but certainly he did not and could not ordain the present order of Hindu Society... The spread and growth of the Caste system is too gigantic a task to be achieved by the power or cunning of an individual or of a class... Similar in argument is the theory that the Brahmins created the Caste. After what I said regarding Manu, I need hardly say anything more, except to point out that it is incor-

rect in thought and malicious in intent. The Brahmins may have been guilty of many things, and I dare say they were, but the imposing of the caste system on the non-Brahmin population was beyond their mettle."[38]

Dr. Ambedkar goes on to describe how Vedic society knew a class system, just like other societies, with as classes the four *varnas*: "1. Brahmins or the priestly class; 2. the Kshatriya, or the military class; 3. the Vaishya, or the merchant class; and 4. the Shudra, or the artisan and menial class. Particular attention has to be paid to the fact that this was essentially a class system, in which individuals, when qualified, could change their class, and therefore classes did change their personnel."[39]

The Brahmins then must have set the trend of class exclusiveness, thus reforming themselves into a caste: "At some time in the history of the Hindus, the priestly class socially detached itself from the rest of the body of people and through a closed-door policy became a caste by itself." On closer consideration, while this statement may seem plausible enough, the question should be asked if it was not rather the Kshatriya nobility which set the trend of keeping the class occupation, rulership, within the clan. At least in numerous other societies we see that rulers often try to overrule existing traditions of elective rulership and reserve the throne for their own sons. The question deserves investigation, but leaves the essence of Dr. Ambedkar's hypothesis intact: a dominant or prestigious class set the trend of caste exclusiveness, and the other classes somehow followed through imitation.

"It is 'the infection of imitation' that caught all these sub-divisions on their onward march of differentiation and has turned them into castes. The propensity to imitate is a deep-seated one in the human mind and need not be deemed an inadequate explanation for the formation of the various castes in India."[40]

Secondly, Dr. Ambedkar also rejected the racist theory of caste: "European students of caste have unduly emphasized the role of colour in the caste system. Themselves impregnated by colour prejudices, they very readily imagined it to be the chief factor in the Caste problem. But nothing can be farther from the truth, and Dr. Ketkar is right when he insists that 'all the princes whether they

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[38] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.1, p.16. Emphasis in the original.
[39] *ibid.*, p.18.
[40] *ibid.*, p.18.

belonged to the so-called Aryan race or the so-called Dravidian race, were Aryas. Whether a tribe or a family was racially Aryan or Dravidian was a question which never troubled the people of India, until foreign scholars came in and began to draw the line.'"[41] Dr. Ketkar and Dr. Ambedkar uphold the traditional Hindu view that the word "Arya" has a social and not an ethnic meaning, precisely like the related word "aristocracy" has had in European history.

Dr. Ambedkar concludes: "My study of the Caste problem involves four points: 1) that in spite of the composite make-up of the Hindu population, there is a deep cultural unity; 2) that caste is a parcelling into bits of a larger cultural unit; 3) that there was one caste to start with; and 4) that classes have become castes through imitation and excommunication."[42]

Again, in his famous address *Annihilation of Caste*, Dr. Ambedkar has specifically rejected the racial theory of caste: "The Brahmin of Panjab is racially of the same stock as the Chamar of Panjab... Caste system does not demarcate racial division. Caste system is a social division of people of the same race."[43]

In his detailed study *Who were the Shudras?*, Dr. Ambedkar has exhaustively refuted the Aryan Invasion theory and its pretence at explaining the institution of caste. He starts by noticing what no propounder of this theory has so far been able to put in doubt: "So far as the Rig Veda is concerned, there is not a particle of evidence suggesting the invasion of India by the Aryans from outside India... So far as the testimony of the Vedic literature is concerned, it is against the theory that the original home of the Aryans was outside India."[44]

The famous theory of a racial conflict between Dasas/Dasyus and Aryas is also refuted. Dr. Ambedkar points out "the paucity of references in the Rig Veda of wars between the Aryans on the one hand and the Dasas and Dasyus on the other". The Rg-Veda is a bulky literature by itself, and yet the term Arya occurs only 33 times in it. Moreover, "only in 8 places is it used in opposition to Dasas and in 7 places is it used in opposition to the word Dasyus. This may show the occurrence of sporadic riots between the two. It is

[41] *ibid.*, p.21, with reference to Ketkar: *History of Caste*, p.82.
[42] *ibid.*, p.22.
[43] *ibid.*, p.49.
[44] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.7, p.74.

certainly not evidence of a conquest or subjugation."[45]

The Dasas were not entirely alien to the Aryas, for "whatever conflict there was between them and the Aryans, the two seem to have arrived at a mutual settlement, based on peace with honour. This is borne out in the Rig Veda showing how the Dasas and Aryans have stood as one united people against a common enemy."[46] In fact, it is pretty well established that the Dasas were one of the Iranian tribes, generally close to the Vedic people in language, customs and religion, but in a position of rivalry and therefore frequently scolded in the Vedic texts.

Finally, Dr. Ambedkar points out how the opposition between Aryas and Dasas/Dasyus is described as a cultural and religious difference (Dasas are "without rites", "without sacrifices", "without prayers" etc.), but never as an ethnic and racial difference. He deals exhaustively with the few words in the Rg-Veda that have been invoked as a support for the racial theory. These are the terms *Mrdhravak*, *Anasa* and *Krshnayoni*, which are used in describing the Dasas or the Dasyus.

The term *Mrdhravak* occurs four times (RV 1:174.2; 5:32.8; 7:6.3; 7:18.3), and Dr. Ambedkar affirms that it means "one who speaks crude, unpolished language". And he comments: "It would be childish to rely upon this as a basis of consciousness of race difference."[47] Let alone difference in race, even difference in language is not implied in this expression.

The word *Anasa*, upon which so much racial theory has been built, occurs exactly once (RV 5:29.10). Max Müller analyzed it as *a-nasa*, meaning "noseless", to be understood as "snub-nosed". There are few people in India to whom this description applies, and even then "noseless" would be an inaccurate way of saying "snub-nosed". There is nothing else in the Rg-Veda that would confirm this interpretation. Dr. Ambedkar therefore supports Sayanacharya's classical analysis of the word as *an-asa*, meaning "speechless" (related to Latin *os*, mouth).

The word *Krshnayoni*, often translated as "black-skinned" or indeed "of black race", is applied to the Dasas exactly once (RV 6:47:21), and no synonymous terms are applied to them. That in itself, Dr. Ambedkar argues, makes the reading "black-skinned"

[45] *ibid.*, p.75.
[46] *ibid.*, with explicit reference to Rg-Veda 6:33.3; 7:83.1; 8:51.9; 10:102.3.
[47] *ibid.*, p.76.

improbable. Indeed, a difference in skin colour would be an ideally simple way of identifying friend and enemy, and in a real report of the epic Aryan Invasion, it would have been used all the time. It is quite certain that a collection of speeches by Ku Klux Klan leaders or by South African racists, of equal size as the Rg-Veda, would contain the words ***kaffer*** or ***nigger*** many more times than just once. Dr. Ambedkar opines that the term may be used in a figurative sense, or be used as a term of abuse rather than as a description of fact.

Others have said that *Krshnayoni* also has the meaning of "black-covered", i.e. "operating under the cover of darkness", indicating activities incompatible with the light of day. The simplest explanation is that in the Rg-Veda, the word "black" generally refers to the night, the darkness as the opponent of the light, as when the dawn-goddess Usha "puts the black monster in hiding" (4:51:9) and "drives away the black monster" (1:92:5). The word *krshnayoni* would then mean "breed of the darkness". Another reason why "black" can hardly refer to skin colour, is that in the most probable hypothesis the Dasas were Iranians, and these were obviously not blacker than the Indo-Aryans.

Then, he quotes some Vedic verses which are explicitly incompatible with the race theory: "Oh Vajri, thou hast made Aryas of Dasas, good men out of bad by your power."(RV 6:22.10) Dasas could become Aryas, but even Vajri's (= Indra's) power has not made a black man white or vice-versa. Indra himself is made to say: "I have deprived the Dasyus of the title of Aryas."(RV 10:49.3) So, "conversion" in the opposite direction also occurred. A third verse reads: "Oh Indra, find out who is an Arya and who is a Dasyu and separate them."(RV 1:151.8) Dr. Ambedkar comments: "These verses... indicate that the distinction between the Aryans on the one hand and the Dasas and Dasyus on the other was not a racial distinction of colour or physionomy."[48] We may surmise that Arya was an honorific term, and that both contending parties claimed it for themselves and denied it to the opponent as a matter of combattive rhetoric.

Dr. Ambedkar also refutes the common belief that *varna* means "skin colour". On the basis of the use of the related terms in the Avestan tradition, he concludes that its effective sociological

[48] *ibid.*, p.77.

meaning was "religious adherence", "(belonging to a) sect or tradition", derived from a root-meaning "choice" (*var*, from the root *vri*, as in *swayam-vara*, "a girl's free choice of a bridegroom"). Many modern Hindus claim that this was indeed the original meaning, suggesting that one's *varna* was originally conceived as a matter of personal choice or inclination (*varana)* towards a profession. The proper translation of *varna* in the Indian context would then be: "chosen membership of a professional guild or social class".

In the Vedas (which represent an earlier stage of the Aryan tradition than the Avesta), the term is mostly applied to the gods. According to Dr. Ambedkar: "The word *varna* is used in the Rig Veda in 22 places. Of these, in about 17 places the word is used in reference to deities such as Ushas, Agni, Soma, etc., and means lustre, features or colour."[49] It is not impossible that *varna* in the sense of "colour, lustre", attested in the Veda, and *varna* in the sense of "choice, conviction, chosen community", attested in the Avesta, are two different though homonymous words, with a different etymology.

The five remaining Rg-Vedic occurrences of the word *varna* do not indicate the sense of "skin-colour" either. In 3:34:5 and 9:71:2 it indicates the lustrous colour that appears with the receding of darkness, as at dawn. Unlike the sky, human beings do not usually change skin colour. In 1:179:6 it is said that the two *varnas* prospered as a result of Rishi Agastya's sexual intercourse with Lopamudra; it is hard to interpret this as "the two races". In 1:104:2 and 2:12:4, the term is applied to the Dasas, and seems to have the same meaning as in the Avesta: a religious tradition, a sect. This would eminently fit Shrikant Talageri's theory (see ch.2.11) that the Dasas are the early Iranians whose conflict with the Vedic people is given a religious colour by emphasizing the differences regarding rituals and the worship of Asuras. At any rate, Dr. Ambedkar correctly concludes that the term *varna* "had nothing to do with colour and complexion".

To be sure, Dr. Ambedkar was not a Vedic scholar, and his opinion should not be used as an argument of authority. But he had common sense and a healthy skepticism regarding the biased Western interpretation of the puzzling Vedic literature. He did not read his preconceived notions into the text. Applying his intellect

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[49] *ibid.*, p.82.

to the historical sources available, he has shown reasonable grounds to reject the racist theory of caste. He explicitates his conclusions as follows: "[My conclusions] are:

1. The Vedas do not know any such race as the Aryan race.
2. There is no evidence in the Vedas of any invasion of India by the Aryan race and its having conquered the Dasas and Dasyus supposed to be the natives of India.
3. There is no evidence to show that the distinction between Aryans, Dasas and Dasyus was a racial distinction.
4. The Vedas do not support the contention that the Aryas were different in colour from the Dasas and Dasyus."[50]

Dr. Ambedkar also uses the evidence of physical anthropology. In his book *Who Were the Shudras?*, he quotes with approval the pioneer of the physical-anthropological mapping of India's population past and present, Dr. Guha: "From the beginning of the 4th millennium BC [i.e. since the oldest dated finds], north-western India seems to have been in the occupation of a long-headed race with a narrow prominent nose. Side by side with them, we find the existence of another very powerfully built race also long-headed, but with lower cranial vault, and equally long-faced and narrow nose, though the latter was not so high-pitched as that of the former. A third type with broader head and apparently Armenoid affinities also existed, but its advent occurred probably somewhat later judged by the age of the site at Harappa from which most of these latter type of skulls came." The two long-headed varieties are elsewhere referred to as Nordic and Mediterranean, while the broad-headed one is the Alpine type. If these were the Aryans, they were not the destroyers of the Harappan civilization, nor were they invaders any time after 4000 BC.

In his book *The Untouchables*, he brings in the research findings of Prof. G.S. Ghurye. The latter has found a few cases where skull and nose measurements show a marked differences between castes of the same region, esp. in U.P., where the Brahmin is markedly different from the untouchable Chamar (but surprisingly close to the untouchable Chuhra of Panjab, which fits the hypothesis that the Vedic tradition was brought from Saptasindhu eastward along with a part of the population, presumably after the decline of the Saraswati basin). However, in general the situation is the oppo-

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[50] *ibid.*, p.85.

site: high and low castes from one area are closer to each other than to their respective caste fellows from another area: "The table for Bengal shows that the Chandal who stands sixth in the scheme of social precedence and whose touch pollutes, is not much differentiated from the Brahmin... In Bombay the Deshastha Brahmin bears a closer affinity to the Son-Koli, a fisherman caste, than to his own compeer, the Chitpavan Brahmin. The Mahar, the Untouchable of the Maratha region, comes next together with the Kunbi, the peasant. They follow in order the Shenvi Brahmin, the Nagar Brahmin and the high-caste Maratha. These results... mean that there is no correspondence between social gradation and physical differentiation in Bombay."[51]

Next he quotes Prof. Ghurye's comparative lists of social precedence and nasal index in the Kannada-, Telugu- and Tamil-speaking regions of Madras presidency. In all three cases, there is by far no one-to-one correspondence between the two lists. Thus, in the Kannada region, the Holaya and the Deshastha Brahmin castes, who are at the opposite ends of the caste hierarchy, have a similar nasal index. With their extreme nasal index, the broad-nosed tribal communities like the Krumba and Solaga are low but not the lowest in the caste hierarchy. Dr. Ambedkar observes that while the picture is not altogether uniform, one can broadly say that, for instance, the nasal indexes of the Chamar and the Brahmin of Bihar are nearly the same, as are the nasal indexes of the Cheruman ("an Unapproachable lower than the Pariah") and the Brahmin of Tamil Nadu.

Therefore he concludes: "If anthropometry is a science which can be depended upon to determine the race of a people, then the results obtained by the application of anthropometry to the various strata of Hindu society disprove that the Untouchables belong to a race different from the Aryans and the Dravidians. The measurements establish that the Brahmins and the Untouchables belong to the same race. From this it follows that if the Brahmins are Aryans the Untouchables are also Aryans. If the Brahmins are Dravidians the Untouchables are also Dravidians. If the Brahmins are Nagas, the Untouchables are also Nagas."[52]

In the course of his refutation of the racial explanation of caste, Dr. Ambedkar makes an observation which, if he had developed it

[51] *ibid.*, p.301.
[52] *ibid.*, p.302-303.

further, would have made redundant much of his more speculative work on the origin of certain features of the caste system (see ch.5.4 and 5.5). He shows that the families (*kula*) and exogamous clans (*gotra*), on the evidence of their names, cut across different castes, e.g. in Panjab the Jats and the (untouchable) Mazhabis have some Gotra names in common. Whether this really proves a kinship between homonymous clans of different castes, as Dr. Ambedkar claims, is a matter for debate. More important is the point he makes off-hand, concerning the structural continuity between caste and tribe: "The racial theory of Untouchability not only runs counter to the results of anthropometry, but it also finds very little support from such facts as we know about the ethnology of India. That the people of India were once organized on tribal basis is well-known, and although *the tribes have become castes*, the tribal organization still remains intact. Each tribe was divided into clans and the clans were composed of groups of families."[53] And this tribal structure continues in the system of endogamous clans or sub-castes, indicating that caste is in fact a continuation of tribal organiztion in a supra-tribal or post-tribal society.

At any rate, Dr. Ambedkar was very clear about the one belief which is now crucial to many self-styled champions of the Dalit cause: he rejected the explanation of caste from the Aryan Invasion theory. In his view, the caste system does not have a racial basis, and does not perpetuate an Apartheid system imposed by invaders on natives. To invoke Dr. Ambedkar as the patron-saint of casteist crank racism, as V.T. Rajshekar and many missionaries and secularists keep on doing, is plainly dishonest.

5.4. Who were the Shudras?

Dr. Ambedkar has launched remarkable theories concerning the genesis of the Shudra varna and of untouchability. The latter subject will be dealt with in the next chapter; about the Shudras, Dr. Ambedkar summarizes his thesis "as follows:

1. The Shudras were one of the Aryan communities of the Solar Race.
2. There was a time when the Aryan society recognized only three varnas, namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas.
3. The Shudraş did not form a separate varna. They ranked as

[53] *ibid.*, p.303. Emphasis added.

part of the Kshatriya varna in the Indo-Aryan society.

4. There was a continuous feud between the Shudra kings and the Brahmins in which the Brahmins were subjected to many tyrannies and indignities.
5. As a result of the hatred towards the Shudras generated by their tyrannies and oppressions, the Brahmins refused to perform the Upanayana of the Shudras.
6. Owing to the denial of Upanayana, the Shudras who were Kshatriyas became socially degraded, fell below the rank of the Vaishyas and thus came to form the fourth varna."[54]

It is interesting, and embarrassing for contemporary Ambedkarites, that Babasaheb held the Shudras guilty of their own lower status; but perhaps they can take some consolation from visualizing how the Brahmins were at one time "oppressed" and "subjected to many tyrannies and indignities".

Today, the Shudras form the majority of the Hindu population even in North India, while in South India, they exceed the 90%. Even after subtracting the SC/STs, they form the bulk of the Hindu population in every part of India. It is hard to imagine all these people being "Kshatriyas", unless we stretch the meaning of the term very much and accept that like today, the *varna* designation was an empty label unrelated to actual occupation. One cannot believe that the Vaishyas at one time were the only ones to be engaged in production, while the majority of people was engaged in non-productive activities like government and warfare.

There is nevertheless a grain of truth in Dr. Ambedkar's theory. He links the Shudras with the Solar race (*Suryavamsha*), the dynasty which according to the Puranas ruled in Ayodhya since at least the 4th millennium BC. The Vedic-Brahminical tradition was developed among the Pauravas (the progeny of Puru, one of the five successors of Yayati), who formed the main line of the Lunar lineage (*Chandravamsha*), and who lived in the Sapta-Sindhu area, esp. the Saraswati basin. The opposition, Vedic/non-Vedic, Lunar/Solar, Saraswati/Ganga, may provide a clue. It is often argued (on the fairly weak basis of *argumentum e silentio*) that the oldest Vedic tradition did not know the Upanayana initiation, and that it was developed as a specific element of the Sapta-Sindhu-based culture comprising the Vedic and what was to become the Avestan

[54] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.7, p.11-12.

traditions. This Upanayana initiation is the defining ritual of the "twice-born" (*dwija*), the members of the first three varnas; only Shudras do not receive it. The Ganga-based Solar race did not know this ritual, and when the Pauravas gained ascendancy and expanded eastward (partly due to the desiccation of the basin of the disappearing Saraswati river), those who practised this ritual (the "twice-born") thereby acquired a superior status. That would be the grain of truth in the proposed link between the non-initiated Shudras and the Solar race.

The Shudra status of even the dominant castes in the South is a later application of the same geographical distinction between the Vedic heartland and the rest of India. Leading castes in the South may consider themselves Kshatriyas, though they have not received the Vedic initiation and do not count as Twice-born in the Brahminical scheme. In a debate on caste-based job reservations, Mani Shankar Aiyar, Congress MP from Tamil Nadu, mentioned three castes in his constituency which the Mandal Commission has classified as "Backward" because Brahmins label them Shudras, but which consider themselves Kshatriyas.[55] Clearly, there is a confusion between the natural interpretation of ***varna*** as social class or social function, which stamps any ruler automatically as a Kshatriya, and the ritual interpretation which only accepts as Kshatriya (and Vaishya and Brahmin) those who have been initiated into the Vedic tradition.

Dr. Ambedkar's explanation of the fourth varna is a valid contribution to one aspect of Indian social history, but not a complete explanation of the widespread phenomenon of the fourfold division with the Shudras as its fourth class. However, is there really a need to explain the origin of the Shudra class? Could it not always have been there, at least as long as Vedic culture existed? After all, the Rg-Veda itself gives the well-known fourfold division, with Brahmins coming from Brahma's mouth, Rajanyas (Kshatriyas) from His arms, Vaishyas from His hips, Shudras from His feet.

But Dr. Ambedkar observes, along with many scholars of his generation, that peoples related to the Vedic Aryans had a division into three classes. It would seem that the common Indo-European heritage was a threefold division (priests, warriors, producers), and that the Vedic people had created an extra class, an innovation

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[55] Debate organized and broadcast by ***Newstrack*** video, 12/1992.

which requires an explanation.

This seems right in most cases, at least at first sight, but the exception is important and provides a clue. In Iran we have a clear class system, largely hereditary, with three classes neatly corresponding to the three upper castes. In Greece, the picture is much less clear, and the division which Strabo and Plato give, is perhaps more theoretical; still, it is not without significance that they give four classes. To the *Brahmin* ("formula-man") corresponds the Iranian *Athravan* ("fire-handler") and the Greek *Hieropoios* ("sacred-doer"); to the *Kshatriya* or *Rajanya* corresponds the Iranian *Rathaeshtar* ("chariot master"), the Greek *Makhimos* ("warrior") or *Phylax* ("guardian"); to the *Vaishya* corresponds the Iranian *Vastryo-fshuyant* ("cultivator/breeder") and the Greek *Georgos*, "cultivator"; the Shudra conceived as an occupational category of artisans, corresponds to the Greek *Demiourgos*, "artisan".

This already shows that an Indo-European society could develop a fourfold division. The symbolic colours allotted to the different classes in India and Iran shows a shift in the colour of the lowest class: both in the Vedic and the Avestan tradition, the priestly class has white and the warrior class has red; but the blue-black colour allotted to the Indian Shudra (still the colour of the Backward Classes movement) goes to the Iranian Vastryo-fshuyant, while the latter's Indian counterpart, the Vaishya, has yellow. If this suggests that the Iranian third class corresponds to the combined third and fourth classes in India, it is interesting to know that according to Indo-Europeanists like Jean Haudry, the Iranian society did have a artisanal fourth *pishtra* (Iranian equivalent of *varna*) called *huiti*, which they consider to be a later addition associated with the stage of urbanization.[56] So, there is sufficient reason to take some distance from Georges Dumezil's *Indo-European trifunctionality* scheme and to accept the possibility that a fourfold division was quite conceivable to the Proto-Indo-Europeans.

Once people have a scheme in mind, they are resistant to many facts that do not fit the scheme. Thus, the scheme of "Indo-European trifunctionality" is often maintained in the face of facts which are in conflict with it. About the Celts, Jean Haudry writes: "We are on solid ground [meaning solid confirmation of the

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[56] J. Haudry: *Les Indo-Europeens*, p.42.

scheme] in Gallic society, divided in Druids, knights and commoners, according to Caesar's testimony; the functional division into three is confirmed by the ancientmost Irish society, divided into a Druid class (with subdivisions), a warrior nobility (*flaith*) and free peasants called 'breeders' (*bo aire*); in Ireland, a class of artisans (*aes dana*) was also added."[57] But who says this fourth class was added? The four classes in Ireland are attested by indigenous sources, the three classes in Gaul are only attested by the outsider Caesar. The support from Celtic society for the scheme of Indo-European trifunctionality may be less splendid than Haudry claims.

Further, the well-attested division of Germanic society into three classes provides, somewhat paradoxically, a strong testimony against the presumed threefold class division. Indeed, the three classes are: the warrior nobility (*Jarl*, whence English *earl*), the free, arms-bearing peasants (*Karl*), and the servants (*thraell*); these correspond to the Indian Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, so that the division between Vaishya and Shudra is attested. The missing class here is not the Shudra but the Brahmin class.[58] Summing up: the distinction between a Shudra and a Vaishya class seems to be attested in the Indian, Greek, Irish, Germanic and perhaps even Iranian branches; it is not a Vedic *curiosum*.

The colour scheme in the Germanic class division is as follows: Jarl (Kshatriya) white, Karl (Vaishya) red, Thraell (Shudra) black. The shift of the colours white and red from the Brahmin to the Kshatriya and from the Kshatriya to the Vaishya class, suggests that the link between symbolic colour and social class is only a secondary and therefore fluid convention, and that the three-colour scheme is in the first place an all-Indo-European cosmological scheme (based on black night, red dawn, white day) which was only secondarily applied to society. This is yet another argument against attaching too much significance to the colour scheme in the Indian context. The absurdity of considering the allotment of black to the Indian Shudras as an indication of skin colour discrimination, comes out clearly when you notice that the Germanic underclass was also given this colour though no dark-skinned people are known to have existed in Sweden.

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[57] J. Haudry: *op.cit.*, p.43.

[58] Then again, at least marginally there seems to have existed an institution of professional priesthood, as at the Swedish religious centre in Uppsala; even if this was not a full-fledged fourth *class*, at least the fourth, Brahminical *function* existed.

There are other examples where the threefold scheme is coupled with the social classes in a clumsy and artificial way. The medieval division in *oratores* (those who pray), *bellatores* (those who fight) and *laboratores* (those who work), lumps the civil non-noble classes together in the "third class" (*le tiers etat*), in spite of real differences between serfs and freemen, peasants and urban guildsmen. The French Revolution was conceived as a take-over by the entire "third class", but gave effective power to the bourgeoisie (the Vaishyas), leaving the Shudra part of the "third class", the proletarians, to yearn for yet another revolution.

In India, we see how the threefold cosmological scheme of the "three qualities" is coupled with the four classes: Brahmins with the white Sattva-guna, Shudras with the black Tamo-guna, Ksyatriyas with the red Rajo-guna, Vaishyas with Rajo-guna mixed with Tamo-guna. This coupling of a cosmological model with divisions in classes of phenomena even where no numerical one-to-one relationship is possible, is quite common in ancient proto-scientific thought. Such uneven correspondence necessarily involves some un-elegant inequality between the elements of the cosmological scheme, but at least symmetry is sought to be maintained.[59] This un-elegant forcing of a correspondence between the observed division of a spectrum (such as the fourfold class division of the social spectrum) with the ideal division of a theoretical symbolic spectrum (*triguna*), merely shows that cosmologists had to take into account realities which were having it their own way, and that they did not have the power to shape society after their own nice little schemes.

Both the Indian theorizers upon society (like the authors of the Manu Smriti) and their Avestan, Druidic etc. counterparts, tried to explain the actual divisions in society in terms of their theoretical schemes; sometimes their version is the only account we have. It is safe to conclude that the pan-Indo-European "trifunctionality scheme" was a perfect theoretical cosmological scheme, while the division of society in classes was a historical process which was

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[59] E.g., the Chinese coupled the "five elements" with the twelvefold division of the circle and the year, in a sequence: wood-wood-earth-fire-fire-earth-metal-metal-earth-water-water-earth. Like *triguna* and *chaturvarna*, the Chinese "five elements" (*wu xing*, strictly "five phases of motion") are coupled with a colour: wood green, fire red, metal white, water black, earth yellow. They, and the Native Americans and many others, allotted colours to the elements, the directions, and the components of every class of phenomena, obviously without meaning skin colour.

only (if ever) ritualized in accordance with the trifunctionality scheme in exceptional circumstances; generally, the correspondence was a theoretical rationalization of a more complex reality. Therefore, the existence of the trifunctionality model does not exclude that a fourfold division was a social reality in many instances of Indo-European societies, not by a later "addition" of a new ethnic group or a new occupational group, but as a spontaneous division in a post-tribal and pre-modern society.

In the correspondence between *triguna* and *chaturvarna*, the striking thing is that Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Shudras simply get one guna, along with the appropriate symbolic colour, while the Vaishyas get a mixture of two gunas (rajas and tamas) and a colour which is outside the normal scheme (yellow). This suggests that the Vaishyas were conceived by the theoreticians of these threefold and fourfold schemes, as lifted up from the Shudra category (where they belonged in the trifunctionality scheme considering their role of producers) and bracketed with the two higher classes in matters of ritual status. So, it is not the Shudra class which was created and requires an explanation: it is rather the Vaishya class which has an odd place in the established scheme, and a concomitant history to be discovered.

In this connection, the issue of relative chronology is important. It has been commonly accepted that the Veda and the Avesta are roughly contemporary, and that the Iranian culture represents a purer form of Indo-European culture than the Vedic and post-Vedic one, because the Iranians stayed by themselves while the Indo-Aryans mixed with the Indian natives. Therefore, the supposed threefold structure mentioned in the Avesta would be the original one, while the "addition" of a fourth class in the Veda would be due to the new circumstances in India, logically to the induction of non-Aryans into the Aryan social scheme.

However, we now consider it sufficiently certain that the Avesta is substantially younger than the Veda, and that the Iranians were emigrants from India, where the fourfold arrangement hinted at in the Veda prevailed. Therefore, to the extent that we have a threefold division in the Iranian and other branches of the Indo-European tradition, this may rather be due to a later development, perhaps caused by the specific situation of these emigrants, who either went as nomadic communities or as trading-colonies settled in an initially foreign environment. The fourfold class division

mentioned in the Veda is after all the oldest literary testimony of Indo-European social stratification that we have. We might as well disconnect the scheme of social division from the cosmological threefold scheme, and accept that the class system was, by and large, essentially fourfold. The distinction among commoners between landowner and landless labourer, employer and employee, Vaishya and Shudra, may be less sharp from the upper-class viewpoint, but would be an obvious socio-economic reality. In that case, there is nothing to be explained about the existence of a Shudra class; what remains to be explained, is why they were excluded from the religious initiation.

The exclusion of the lowest class from certain religious rites is again not an exceptional phenomenon, nor necessarily an innovation. In Roman society there was, as far back as we can see, a division between *Plebs* and *Optimates* (from *optimus*, "the best", analogous to Greek *aristokratia* from *aristos*, "the best", itself from the same root as *arya*), i.e. commoners and aristocrats. The sacra, the public religious functions, were a privilege of the Optimates. The highest person in the ancientmost Roman society, the king, had essentially a religious role, which was nominally preserved even after the abolition of kingship as a political function (the regia potestas, the "royal power", was the power to represent the nation before the gods). Elsewhere too, social rank and political authority used to be joined to a corresponding role in public religion. In Israel, king David danced before his people and his God, and he wrote and sang psalms; the religious role of the Egyptian Pharaoh is equally well-known.

So, the correspondence between social rank and religious rank is not an invention of the Brahmins in India, but the application of a world-wide convention. Even so, the Brahmins have been the guardians and instruments of this tradition of distinguishing or discriminating between the social classes in religious matters. Dr. Ambedkar's reconstruction of the conflicts between tribes and classes in ancient India is interesting, but is obviously insufficient to explain an all-prevading social phenomenon like the distinction between Dwijas and Shudras.

5.5. Origin of untouchability

About the origin of untouchability, Dr. Ambedkar offered several interwoven theories. One is the theory that the untouchables

were originally "Broken Men", people who had been isolated from the community, through expulsion from or the extinction of the community, or in other ways. These broken men were then allowed to live along with other communities, but on the outside.

One might explain the fact that these "broken men" were kept outside the village because of the belief that everything severed from the whole to which it belongs, is inauspicious, e.g. the widow whose living-unit, the married couple, has been broken (similarly, the person with limbs lost). But Dr. Ambedkar does not accept such ritualistic grounds for social institutions.

A commentator sees the rationale of Dr. Ambedkar's theory: "At first sight this theory may seem rather far-fetched. But there is certainly an element of truth in it. It is a well-known fact that the nomadic animal-breeders of Inner Asia, for example, enjoyed nothing more than raiding and fighting. When a tribe was defeated and routed, the survivors often used to be sold into slavery by their conquerors. Those who managed to escape had to seek protection of another tribe. Being powerless, they had often to content themselves with menial jobs, tending horses and cattle, making and repairing saddles [etc.]. As these animal breeding nomads generally despised menial and manual work, this contempt was also extended to those who had to perform it."[60]

Similarly, survivors who sought the protection of cultivators were "employed by the cultivators as watchmen and defenders of their property and lives... In payment for their services, the warriors received their daily food from their employers, a stipulated amount of grain at harvest time, and all the carcasses of cattle which they, as former breeders, had been in the habit of eating. They were not allowed to stay in the settlement, but were kept outside as guards and soldiers..."[61]

The description fits Dr. Ambedkar's own *Mahar* community and its North-Indian *Chamar* counterpart very well. But it is hard to reconcile with another fact about untouchability to which Dr. Ambedkar draws due attention: the fact that untouchability is a two-way street. Not only do Brahmins avoid contact with Untouchables, but Untouchables also avoid contact with Brahmins. Dr. Ambedkar quotes with approval a number of testimonies to this effect, including this passage from Abbe Dubois' *Hindu Manners*

[60] S. Fuchs: *At the Bottom of Indian Society*, p.13.
[61] *ibid.*, p.14.

and Customs: "The Pariahs on their part will under no circumstance allow a Brahmin to pass through their paracherries (collection of Pariah huts) as they firmly believe it will lead to their ruin."[62] How can this antipathy be there if the Broken Men were a totally dependent community which had reasons to be gratefu to the community which employed them?

Dr. Ambedkar opines: "This antipathy can be explained on one hypothesis. It is that the Broken Men were Buddhists. As such they did not revere the Brahmins, did not employ them as their priests and regarded them as impure. The Brahmins on the other hand disliked the Broken Men because they were Buddhists and preached against them contempt and hatred with the result that the Broken Men came to be regarded as Untouchables."[63]

Unfortunately, we can make short work of this theory. Its premise is: "We have no direct evidence that the Broken men were Buddhists. No evidence is as a matter of fact necessary when the majority of Hindus were Buddhists. We may take it that they were."[64] In fact, Buddhism was never the adopted religion of more than a few percent of India's population. It was an upper-class religion, and depended heavily on patronage. With its rationalist outlook, it was certainly not a religion of the illiterate masses, a term in which we may include many of the labourers who make up the untouchable castes.

Further, unlike the Jains, the Buddhists have no developed status of the "lay Buddhist". If you were not a Buddhist monk, you were a layman, a member of the surrounding society, and that is all. In the biographies of Buddhist monks, we find that they were recruited from Hindu castes (with the most prominent Buddhist scholars almost invariably from the Brahmin caste) rather than from "the Buddhist community". In lay society, Buddhists were not separate. Therefore, to derive the populous untouchable castes from the supposed Buddhist community (and that, moreover, only from the Broken Men among them) is an implausible proposition.

Moreover, while there has been friction between Brahmins and Buddhists, as between rival Buddhist sects, it seems that Dr. Ambedkar exaggerates the size and importance of this conflict. At this point, he apparently follows the received wisdom, intensely pro-

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[62] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.7, p.314.
[63] *ibid.*, p.315.
[64] *ibid.*

moted in his day by M.N. Roy, of a centuries-long persecution of Buddhism by Brahminism. This, however, is definitely a myth. As it is a weighty point in the anti-Hindu campaign in which Dr. Ambedkar's name is also regularly invoked, we will take it up at some length. To refute the ever more terrible stories which the press conveys about the centuries of Brahminical onslaught on the Buddhists, we have the honour of quoting one of India's foremost Marxist historians, D.D. Kosambi.

About the common belief that after the supposedly Buddhist emperor Ashoka, the Brahminical establishment took revenge, Kosambi writes: "The state support that Ashoka had given continued till the end of the twelfth century, when all monastic foundations in the north were finally looted and wiped out by Muslims... The gifts were never rescinded by pre-Muslim kings. The immediate successors of the Mauryas favoured brahmins. The first Shunga king celebrated a horse sacrifice in yajna style. This had no effect upon Buddhism, as is shown by the augmented Shunga structures at Sanchi. The Mahabharata was prominently cited in Gupta land-grants to brahmins, from the fourth century; but at the same time Buddhist monasteries were renovated and their stipends increased."[65]

The exception is Narendragupta-Shashank of West Bengal, who is believed to have destroyed Buddha images and cut down the bodhi tree. But as we know from Xuan Zang (older transcriptions: Hiuen Tsang, Hsuan Tsang), the very source of this allegation, a few years after this presumed incident, the bodhi tree was standing there in full glory: that is the empirical fact, witnessed by Xuan Zang with his own eyes. The fiercely sectarian Xuan Zang tries to make this fact compatible with the allegation that the tree was cut down, by a fairy-tale that the tree had grown again overnight: no man of scientific temper will prefer this fairy-tale to the observed fact that the bodhi tree had come through Shashank's invasion in good condition.

The whole story of Shashank's anti-Buddhist fanaticism is rejected by Prof. Benimadhab Barua, who was personally involved in the process of re-opening the Mahabodhi temple (standing next to the bodhi tree). After reproducing Xuan Zang's account of how Shashank shied awy from breaking a Buddha statue after seeing its

[65] D.D. Kosambi: *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India*, p.180.

"loving features", he reasons: "From this account, it does not certainly appear that Shashank, the decried royal promotor of the Shaiva cause, was either a religious fanatic or a vandal, but rather as one on whose mind the very sight of the lovely figure of the Buddha, the lasting work of fame of a Brahmin artist enshrined as the greatest object of veneration in the temple erected by a Shaiva Brahmin, produced the deepest impression... The impression which [the account] creates rather is that when he had halted at Bodh Gaya on his way back to his capital after having carried out a campaign in the kingdom of Magadha or farther west, he eventually visited the recently built famous shrine."[66]

Still, even Prof. Barua believes that Shashank was a Shaiva fanatic, but more against rival god-cults than against the atheist sect of the Buddha: "If *[repeat: if]*, as it seems, Shaivism became aggressive from the 5th or the 6th century or even from a still earlier date, under the strong support of such a powerful king of northern India as Shashank, it must be conceded that it had tried to make its supremacy felt not only at Bodh Gaya but over the entire region of Gaya. Viewed in its true historical perspective, this work of aggression on the part of Maheshwara was to gain an ascendancy over his rivals Shakra and Brahma, and so far as the Buddhist shrine at Bodh Gaya is concerned, he sought to step into the place of these earlier guardian deities, never to usurp the eminence of the Buddha."[67] That would leave him with even less reason to cut down the bodhi tree.

Even D.D. Kosambi. the Marxist believer in this fairy-tale of Shashank's destruction of the Buddha's relics, observes: "All was quickly restored in a few years by the munificence of Harsha." Harsha was a Shaiva king, claimed by the sectarian Xuan Zang as a Buddhist but in reality a normal pluralistic and generous Hindu who patronized Buddhist institutions as well as those of other sects. In 655 the opulent monastery of Nalanda was sacked by brigands in the general disorder after Harsha's death. But this cannot be construed as a sign of rising Hindu fanaticism, on the contrary: "However, the Palas restored the financial position in the next century, and built several new *vihara* foundations, including the

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[66] B.M. Barua: "Bodh Gaya from Buddhist Point of View and Bodh Gaya from Hindu Point of View", app.2 in Dipak K. Barua: *Buddha Gaya Temple, Its History*, p.262-263.

[67] *ibid.*, p.264.

huge abbey not far from Nalanda from which the name Bihar was later given to the whole province. The Senas, unquestionably Hindu kings in the modern sense of the word, continued the donations and had to fortify the Pala monasteries in order to protect the treasures within from brigands. This only led to the buildings being stormed and sacked all the more thoroughly by a handful of Muslim raiders under Mohammed bin Bakhtyar Khalji... about AD 1200. The tremendous complex of stupas and monasteries at Sarnath which had grown up on the site of the first Buddhist sermon... was wrecked beyond recovery, thus ending a continuous tradition of refuge and meeting-place for ascetics which went back to the centuries before the Buddha."[68]

In Muslim territory, Buddhism was destroyed root and branch, but not in Hindu territory: "The Koreans could still invite an Indian Buddhist monk during the fourteenth century, but not from any of the classical foundations; it had to be from the south, where Buddhism was quietly fading away. For that matter, the minor non-Buddhist schools such as the materialist Lokayatas and the near-Buddhist followers of the Sakyan Devadatta were known to survive in Magadha at least till the seventh century. They were not destroyed, but withered away in peaceful decay in a land that could tolerate many incompatible systems at the same time..."[69]

"The question of the 'restoration of Hinduism' or of some king being Buddhist or Hindu is meaningless. Many people, kings or commoners, could support the later brahmin ritual, worship prehistoric gods barely made decent, and simultaneously give generous donations to Buddhists, Ajivikas and Jains right through to the end."[70]

A telling example of what modern Indians would call a "secular" king was Harsha of Kanauj, already mentioned as Xuan Zang's host: "Harsha of Kanauj, whose support of Buddhism is not in doubt and who could forgive an assassin he had personally disarmed, styled himself 'High Follower of Shiva' (*paramamaheshvara*) in the land grants he made to brahmins like any other king of the medieval period. Moreover, his clan deity was the sun god, popular in the Panjab since Persian influence entered again with the Kushanas and created a new sect of 'Maga brahmins',

[68] Kosambi: *op.cit.*, p.181.
[69] Kosambi: *op.cit.*, p.180.
[70] Kosambi: *op.cit.*, p.180.

presumably of Magian origin. Harsha correspondingly assumed the title *parama-bhattaraka* as well. Finally, one of his Sanskrit plays, the *Nagananda,* where he himself acted the part of the self-sacrificing Buddhist hero, is dedicated most devoutly to Gauri ('the white goddess', i.e. Parvati), consort of Shiva. Neither he nor any of the monks, whether Buddhist, Jain, Ajivika or others, who gathered in their thousands along with the brahmins at the Ganga-Yamuna confluence every five years for a great distribution of gifts by the emperor, would have been conscious of any contradiction."[71]

Short, the antagonism between Brahmanism and Buddhism has been much exaggerated, to put it mildly. Certainly there have been disputes between Buddhists and non-Buddhists, though seldom as heated as those between rival Buddhist sects; but doctrinal differences are a legitimate exercise of intellectual freedom, and should not be equated with persecution or with "the destruction of Buddhism by Brahminical onslaught" which Hindu-baiters have invented. The largely theoretical antagonism between Vedic and Buddhist spokesmen will therefore not explain the large and pervasive social phenomenon of untouchability.

In fact, the opposite thesis has been put forward: that Buddhism, rather than being the victim of the policy which would end up branding its followers as untouchables, is itself the first responsible for the institution of untouchability. The reasoning is that Buddhism has invented ahimsa and the notion of "right livelihood", and has consequently indicted those who make a living through un-Buddhist occupations. The analogy with the Japanese *Burakumin* is cited: progeny of butchers who bear the hereditary stigma of their ancestors' disrespect for the rule of "right livelihood". But this theory is just another shot in the free-for-all of ancient Indian history.

With his twin theories of the Untouchables as "Broken men" and as ex-Buddhists, Dr. Ambedkar has for once succumbed to the common temptation of what one might call "deep thinking": always seeing something else than what is visible, seeing something secret behind the obvious. By limiting his explanation of untouchability to social and political factors, Dr. Ambedkar merely gives proof of his intellectual conditioning as a modern man. For us moderns, it is almost incomprehensible that people have ever been able to hon-

[71] Kosmbi: *op.cit.*, p.180-181.

estly attach such heavy social consequences to ethereal and "superstitious" concepts like ritual purity. It is not abnormal that modern people would suspect a social-political conspiracy behind untouchability, because the extreme concern for ritual purity which was its real reason, is just too foreign to us.

We can just as well assume that untouchability is what it seems to be: an extreme protection against ritual impurity. Impure is, essentially, all that is dead: corpses; excrement; body tissue after its removal from the body: hair, nails, sweat, skin, menstrual and other blood, after birth. In itself (though not always in its social implications), this concept of purity is widespread, with minor variations: e.g. Muslims consider themselves ritually impure every time a substance has left the body. The primitive rationale behind this purity concept is probably that dead matter has some spirits roaming around it, some aura of death, and therefore constitutes a source of danger: this way, the concepts of danger and purity are closely related. This aversion for different types of dead material explains the graded untouchability status of washermen, barbers, leather-workers, sweepers and funeral personnel.

Dr. Ambedkar does concede one important consideration of ritual purity as a factor in the genesis of untouchability, though as part of his thesis that the Untouchables were really the Buddhists: that the untouchables are really those people who continued to eat beef after the rest of Hindu society had abandoned the habit. For at least some of the untouchable castes this would apply, but again, it is not the whole story.

It doesn't have to be the whole story, because we can at least agree with Dr. Ambedkar that different factors played a role, and that beef-eating was one of them. But there is one other factor which Dr. Ambedkar has not taken into account. It is the impact of Islam.

5.6. Identification of Hinduism and caste

After briefly describing the system of the four varnas, Ambedkar writes: "This is called by the Hindus the *Varna Vyavastha*. It is the very soul of Hinduism. Without *Varna Vyavastha* there is nothing else in Hinduism to distinguish it from other religions."[72]

One might say that the caste system has been Hinduism's body

[72] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.4, p.189.

for a long time, the concrete structure with which Hindu culture organized its social dimension. But that is something very different from saying that caste is the soul of Hinduism, its intrinsic essence. Thus, the Dutch scholar Peter van der Veer writes that caste may not be as all-pervading or intrinsic to Hinduism as is usually claimed: "The idea that caste is the basis of the Indian social order and that to be a Hindu is to be a member of a caste became an axiom in the British period. What actually happened during that period was probably a process of caste formation and more rigid systematization due to administrative and ideological pressure from the colonial system, which reminds us of the so-called 'secondary tribalization' in Africa."[73]

Those enemies of Hindu society who consider the severest condemnation of the caste system a self-evident matter, usually proceed to blacken Hinduism by arguing that caste is the inherent and inalienable dimension of Hinduism. In contemporary missionary propaganda, the equation of caste and Hinduism is emphasized. Those researchers who have imbibed this line of thought, formulate it explicitly. Harold A. Gould summarizes: "Most [researchers] have found [caste] an integral and inalienable part of the Hindu religion." And he himself agrees: "This ancient social institution was the necessary sociological manifestation of the underlying moral and philosophical presuppositions of Hinduism. Without traditional Hinduism there could have been no caste system. Without the caste system traditional Hindu values would have been inexpressible."[74]

Let us find out for ourselves what to think of this fairly common identification of Hinduism and caste. We may first of all remark the circularity in the argument quoted above. "Traditional Hinduism", of which it is asserted that it could not exist without the caste system, is in fact defined as that stream in Indian culture and religion which recognized caste, as opposed to "heterodox" streams which are believed to be without caste and even (erroneously) described as "revolts against caste". There is no attempt to define "caste" and "traditional Hinduism" separately and then to demonstrate the link between the two: they are equated *a priori*.

Let us therefore take up "caste" and "the values of traditional

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[73] P. van der Veer: *Gods on Earth* (Oxford University Press, Delhi 1989), p.53.
[74] Harold A. Gould: *The Sacralization of a Social Order*, Chanakya Publ., Delhi 1987.

Hinduism" separately, and see where exactly they meet. First of all, we should distinguish between *jati* and *varna*, both inexactly translated as "caste". The division of society into separate functions, four *varnas* each with its own duties and privileges, exists in most societies. Yet, the difference in status, with specific duties and privileges, including different penal codes (as per the *Dharma Shastras*), has seldom been so consciously systematized as in Hindu tradition. However, the division most typical of Hindu society in the last few millennia, and the one considered so outrageously unjust because of its determination of status by birth, is the division in *jatis*, which may or may not follow and further subdivide the *varna* distinctions.

We repeat that these divisions of societies into endogamous groups with hereditary social roles have also existed elsewhere, e.g. the European nobility with its hereditary leadership role, or the Japanese *burakumin* with their inherited "untouchability", or the hereditary guilds of blacksmiths and of musicians in West Africa. In China and Japan, the rule that professions had to remain in the same family and that the son had to continue the father's trade, has been imposed under certain dynasties. A number of vanishing primitive societies have been recorded as entertaining divisions in endogamous groups, i.e. *jatis*. But we may accept that the division in endogamous groups has nowhere been so systematized and on such a large scale as the Hindu caste system.

Now in what sense could we say that the division in endogamous groups was necessary for expressing traditional Hindu values? In the Rg-Veda, we find no trace of this division. In its tenth and last book (claimed by some to be a later interpolation, but let that pass), there is mention of the four *varnas* springing from the different parts of Brahma's body, but that is a different matter altogether: as Dr. Ambedkar says, the Vedic *varnas* constitute a class system, not a caste system. Central Hindu values expressed in the Rg-Veda could do without the *jati* system.

Among these values, there is first of all *Rta*, the world order. This at once sounds like the justification *par excellence* for social division: for *varna* though not for *jati*. The year is ordered by division in seasons (*Rtu*) with their own typical outlook and characteristic activities, and similarly society should be divided in classes with their own duties and distinctive customs. Alright, but such division has existed in most societies: they all recognize that

different functional classes (*varnas*) as well as different age groups (*ashramas*, life stages) have their distinctive duties and customs. In that sense, *varnashramadharma* has been a universal phenomenon, only Hindus have theorized a bit more upon it (Mahatma Gandhi's defence that "Hindus have turned it into a science" is unfortunate in that it uses the term *science* in the vague and prescientific sense of "systematic doctrine"). Neither here nor there does it require a division in endogamous groups with a hereditary monopoly on specific professions.

Akin to *Rta*, there is *Satya*, truthfulness. At the worldly level, truthfulness implies being true to one's inner qualities, to one's vocation. As there are human beings of different qualities (*gunas*, symbolically corresponding to "colours", *varnas*), so there are different social roles to be filled by people with the appropriate vocation. This virtue of truthfulness to one's own natural ability is sometimes quite in conflict with the restriction of professions to hereditary castes. There may well be a statistical relation between parents' and children's vocations (in fact it is the experience of many generations that "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree"), but that leaves many cases where people are not sincerely inclined to follow in their parents' footsteps. So, the imposition of hereditary professions is only compatible with *Satya* to the extent that natural inclination is hereditary; in general, Satya requires the freedom of individuals to follow their own vocation, which may differ from that of their ancestors.

In the Bhagavad-Gita, the link between truthfulness and vocation or worldly function is explicitly made in the notion of *Swadharma*: "one's own duty". The exact definition of Swadharma is a matter of dispute, and is crucial to the link between caste and the Hindu ethos. It is often translated as "one's own caste duty", both by traditionalists and by detractors of Hinduism. Reformers, on the other hand, claim that it is to be interpreted as "individual vocation", somewhat along the lines of Nietzsche's individualistic dictum: "There is only one way in the world which no one can go but you. Where it leads?, don't ask: follow it!"

To me it seems that this individualistic interpretation is not in agreement with the context of ancient Hindu culture. In this traditional vision, we should not think we are all that unique: though there are different types of people, everybody falls into one of these types, *varnas*. That is why Indian art is not made by a named

artist, but by The artist, incarnated in numerous nameless individuals, unlike the narcissistic and eccentric modern artists. So also, Arjuna is called upon to do a duty which is not all that unique, viz. to fight, to enact the archetypal role of the warrior. Arjuna's Swadharma is Kshatriyadharma.

But with that, we have not yet answerd the crucial question: is varna, and with it swadharma, dependent on one's birth? In Gita 1:41, Arjuna justifies his inaction by painting all the effects which the battle between himself and his Kaurava relatives would have, and one of them is that the women lose their virtue and thereby cause *varnasamkara*, "mixture of varnas". Clearly, a sexual mixing of varnas is intended, and depicted as utterly disastrous, which implies that endogamy is upheld as an essential virtue. But, say the reformers, it is not Krishna who is saying this, it is the vacillating Arjuna; what he says, is descriptive of the customs in his age, but not normative. Krishna does not preach endogamy anywhere.[75]

Further, Yudhishthir, the other far-sighted protagonist in the Mahabharat, of which the Gita forms a part, says in so many words that one is not a Brahmin by birth or by externals. Therefore, while not describing a casteless society, the Mahabharat is not objecting to it either. At any rate, the term Swadharma can perfectly be interpreted as meaning "duty grounded in one's natural quality" rather than "hereditary duty".

Proceeding to another Hindu value, in the Vedic vision, man is ethically bound to pay off his three debts: to the gods by sacrifice, to the parents by procreation, and to the teachers by practising and passing on the acquired learning and tradition, and by reverence and support to teachers in general. Certain virtues are encouraged, notably *dana*, liberality, or what Christians call *charity*. None of this requires a division of society in endogamous groups. Again, one fails to see how this leads to a caste system, unless one assumes that "honouring the ancestors" implies treading in their footsteps when choosing a profession, an assumption not supported by the experience in other ancestor-worshipping societies like the Chinese.

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[75] Similarly, of Dronacharya's refusal to teach the Bhil boy Ekalavya archery, it is said that after all, Dronacharya is fighting on the Kaurava side, so that his conduct is not be emulated. That does injustice to the human complexity of the narrative, in which no one is simply good or bad. It may be more fruitful for reformist-Hindu apologists to analyse the Ekalavya passage more closely: is it really true that he is refused because of his caste, and that Drona asks him for his thumb because he objects to a non-Kshatriya practising archery?

Some elements of Hindu culture and religion are often said to have been borrowed from the "casteless pre-Aryan peoples": classical music, devotional flower ritual (puja), goddess veneration, Shiva, Ganesha, the belief in reincarnation, yoga, the emphasis on physical purity and bathing, etc. These elements are therefore assumed (by the very extollers of "pre-Aryan" and detractors of "Aryan" culture) not to be intrinsically linked with the supposedly Aryan-imposed caste system. Therefore, those who try to turn the Hindu masses away from Hinduism by tying its religious contents to the caste system and blackening both together, land themselves in a contradiction. One of these supposedly "pre-Aryan" beliefs nonetheless deserves special attention as a possible factor of Hindu loyalty to caste: the doctrine of reincarnation and karma.

It has often been said that the belief in reincarnation is a cornerstone of the caste system. For instance, the Christian polemist Dr. J. Verkuyl writes: "...the caste system in India has always been officially justified and legitimized by the doctrine of karma. Someone's birth in a higher or a lower caste or as an outcaste was the consequence of the law of karma."[76] But the fact is that many other societies have known the doctrine of reincarnation (e.g. the Druze of West Asia) without setting up a division in endogamous groups, or at least without deriving the need for such a division from this belief.

It is especially remarkable that Buddhism has brought the notion of reincarnation and karma to most of East Asia, without thereby creating a caste system. To be sure, Buddhism never had the intention of reforming the Chinese, Japanese, Burmese etc. societies in any direction, and it fully cooperated and integrated with the existing feudal and monarchical establishments in these countries; but if caste were "the necessary sociological manifestation of the moral and philosophical presuppositions of Hinduism", among which reincarnation and karma are certainly the foremost, then these same notions, even when labelled "Buddhist", should have had the same effect on those other societies.

One might reply that the Buddhist notion of reincarnation is not entirely the same, as Buddhism "does not believe in the Self". We will deal with the doctrine of no-self in ch.5.10, but for now, we may observe that in actual practice, Chinese Buddhists have

[76] Dr. J. Verkuyl: *De New Age Beweging* (J.H. Kok, Kampen 1989), p.71.

exactly the same notion of reincarnation as Hindus, relative to their level of education.

Semi-literate people in both cases take the karma doctrine as a ground for fatalism: you have deserved what you are getting, so don't complain. People with more understanding take it as a ground for activism: you make your own fate, so do your best. Practically all of them, excepting a handful of scriptural purists, take reincarnation as an individual process, as a journey of an individual Self directed towards its temporary destiny by its specific load of karma. The *Jatakas* describe the previous incarnations of the Shakyamuni Buddha, the Dalai Lama (and all the other institutionally reincarnating lamas) is believed to be always the same individual reincarnating, etc.: in actual practice, Buddhists outside India have the same understanding of reincarnation as Hindus have.

And yet, in countries at some distance from India where Buddhism became the state religion, it has not built the same social system. That is because the Buddhist notion of reincarnation does not motivate people to build a particular type of society rather than another one, just like the Hindu notion of reincarnation is not the cause of India's particular type of society either. It is simply wrong to deduce an entire social system from abstract metaphysical notions like *karma*.

When people claim that traditional Hindu values automatically lead to the caste system, they make refutation difficult thanks to the multiplicity of meanings one can give to the term "traditional Hindu values". We have considered a few obvious interpretations of this term, including Vedic notions like truth (*satya*), world order (*rta*) and "trinity of debts" (*rnatraya*), and the notions of *karma* and *swadharma* explained in the Bhagavad-Gita.

Yet, there is one intrinsic aspect of Hindu culture for which the caste system was an eminently useful (though not strictly necessary) social framework: the fabled Hindu tolerance. Nowadays, some people try to tell us that "Hindu tolerance is a myth", but in fact it is a feature that has been remarked by Christian and Muslim writers *in tempore non suspecto*, starting with Albiruni. It is one thing to say that Hindu society has received the persecuted Jewish, Syrian Christian and Parsi communities well, but another to devise a system that allowed them to retain their identity and yet integrate into Hindu society. Whatever else one may think about the caste

system, it is a fact that it facilitated the integration of separate communities.

In fact, this very process of integration of separate communities with respect for their distinct identity is at least a part of how the caste system came into being: by gradually integrating endogamous tribal communities in such a way that they could retain their identity, with only minor changes in their traditions. The British indologist J.L. Brockington correctly argues that one of the prime functions of caste "has been to assimilate various tribes and sects and by assigning them a place in the social hierarchy", but that caste, "though intimately connected with Hinduism, is not necessary to it".[77]

5.7. Ambedkar on Hinduism

After showing that essential doctrines and expressions of Hinduism are perfectly conceivable and viable without the caste system, we will now mention a few aspects of Dr. Ambedkar's views on Hinduism. The very subject "Ambedkar's view on Hinduism", detailing the chronology, access to sources etc., will need another book of this size, so here I will limit myself to a few remarks.

Dr. Ambedkar's starting-point is a very sound one: there are universal and objective criteria with which to measure religious doctrines, and we should indeed judge religions and their effects upon human life without giving in to the sentimental apriori belief that all religions are equally true. "Comparative Religion has done a great service to humanity. It has broken down the claim and arrogance of revealed religions as being the only true and good religions... [But] it has brought inits wake some false notions about religion. The most harmful one is... that all religions are equally good and that there is no necessity of discriminating between them. Nothing can be a greater error than this. Religion is an institution or an influence and like all social influences and institutions, it may help or it may harm a society which is in its grip."[78]

It is not indifferent whether a society is dominated by this religion or that one. Thus, Islam is sure to bring intolerance and persecution of unbelievers and dissidents. What are the evils which Hinduism brings?

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[77] J.L. Brockington: *The Sacred Thread: A Short History of Hinduism*, quoted in review by A.N.D. Haksar, *Sunday Observer*, 24/1/1993.

[78] Dr. Ambedkar: *Philosophy of Hinduism*, in *Writings and Speeches*, vol.3, p.24.

Firstly, in a strictly religious sense, it has nothing to offer, on the contrary. Dr. Ambedkar approvingly quotes Thomas Huxley describing Upanishadic asceticism as "reducing the human mind to that condition of impassive quasi-somnambulism, which, but for its acknowledged holiness, might run the risk of being confounded with idiocy."[79] Unfortunately, whoever equates the concentrated mental alertness developed in meditation with "somnambulism" and "idiocy", merely proves his incompetence on the subject. Here we see the fatal flaw in Dr. Ambedkar's writings on Hindu philosophy: sometimes, he has just lapped up the views of ignorant scholars from the Enlightened West.

However, on the profundities of Upanishadic thought, Dr. Ambedkar's understanding is not very accurate. Objecting to the Upanishadic doctrine of Atamn and Brahman, he writes: "Yajnavalkya was asked: 'What is Brahman? What is Atman?' All that Yajnavalkya could say: Neti! Neti! I know not! I know not!' 'How can anything be a reality about which no one knows anything', asked the Buddha. He had therefore no difficulty in rejecting the Upanishadic thesis as being based on pure imagination."[80] And yet, it does not take deep mystical experiences to answer the question which Dr. Ambedkar attributes to the Buddha. There is one thing that can be a reality without anyone being able to know it: the knowing entity itself. The one thing that cannot be an object of knowing, is the subject of knowing. Incidentally, the term "*neti neti*" does not mean simply "I know not (2x)" It means: "Not this, not this", i.e. not capable of being conceived in pairs of opposites, which are used in classifying any knowable object with specific qualities.

Coming to the predictable social objections to Hinduism, Dr. Ambedkar has acknowledged that the Vedas knew neither untouchability nor a strict caste system, merely a class system. But he follows the division of Indian history which Western scholars have established, and which distinguishes between, among others, the "Vedic period", the "Buddhist period" and the "Hindu period". The latter, starting with the Gupta period, is characterized by the religious predominance of the Puranas and the Bhagavad-Gita, and the social predominance of the Dharma Shastras: this complex is called

[79] *ibid.*, p.85, with reference to Huxley: *Evolution and Ethics*, p.63-64, McMillan & Co., London 1903.

[80] *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, III.1:4:16-17.

Hinduism. It is a matter for research when exactly this shift from Vedic to Hindu took place.

Now, in defining post-Vedic, classical Hinduism, Dr. Ambedkar makes his single biggest mistake. He identifies Hinduism with the Manu Smriti: "One does not have to search for [Hinduism's] scheme of divine governance. It... is enshrined in a written constitution and anyone who cares to know it will find it laid bare in that Sacred Book called the Manu Smriti, a divine Code which lays down the rules which govern the religious, ritualistic and social life of the Hindus in minute detail and which must be regarded as the Bible of the Hindus and contains the philosophy of Hinduism."[81]

This is simply not true. Apart from its limited effectiveness in regulating Hindu social life, apart from its juxtaposition with other Smritis, apart from its self-confessed temporary character and relatively late date, the one overriding argument against this elevation of Manu Smriti as "the Bible of the Hindus", is that it evidently does *not* contain "the *philosophy* of Hinduism". Even if it had been an effective and permanent law code, one could only call it the social code of Hinduism, not its philosophy; the body of Hinduism, not its soul.

Ambedkar undermines his own identification of Manu with Hinduism, by confronting him with other authors: "Take Manu's origin of Magadha and Vaidehik and compare it with the origin of some castes as given by Panini the great grammarian." Manu says these two castes are the offspring of mixed Vaishya x Kshatriya and Vaishya x Brahmin marriages respectively, Panini says they are just the residents of Magadha and Videha. "What a contrast! How cruel it is. Panini lived not later than 300 BC, Manu lived about AD 200. How is it that people who bore no stigma in the time of Panini became so stained in the hands of Manu?...The answer is that Manu was bent on debasing them... While religion everywhere else is engaged in the task of raising and ennobling mankind, Hinduism is busy debasing and degrading it." p.37

At this point, Dr. Ambedkar has cursorily referred to an authentic source from the pre-Manu Smriti period, viz. Panini. In Panini, he has not found Manu's obsessive and cranky preoccupation with caste purity and the attribution of large social phenomena to the mixing of castes (incidentally, Manu in a sense gives a stri-

[81] *Philosophy of Hinduism*, p.7-8.

dent indictment on the jati system by explaining it as the result of the hated horrible *varnasamkara*, mixing of varnas). He could also have quoted Kautilya and Megasthenes, who give a much more sane and relaxed account of the division and stratification of Hindu society, an account which hardly tallies with the orthodox scheme and is much less inequality-ridden.

Dr. Ambedkar does not at all take the contemporary testimony into account on whether the Manu Smriti was that all-important. From independent evidence, it would appear that judgment was not given with reference to the Smritis, but with reference to local custom. That the Smritis controlled the life of the Hindus from cradle to funeral pyre, is a proposition for which the burden of proof rests on those who advance it.

Caste was not all that omnipresent. That Dr. Ambedkar got this impression, was due to specific circumstances created by British rule. Firstly, the East India Company had entrusted Brahmins with the task of informing its own officials who were compiling a native-based law code. They imposed their own view, which was the scripturalist reference to the Smritis. Secondly, there was the, perhaps unintended, effect of policies of the modern state. As J.C. Heesterman writes, "the modern state — in contradistinction to the ancien regime — is hived off from society and pretends to govern it by remote control as it were. To that end, it first of all needs an all-inclusive and immutable grid of rigidly bounded and inflexible categories... This need for an immutable grid of categories was filled with deplorable obviousness by caste, seemingly custom-made for the purpose, esp. in its Brahmanic form of varna separation. Conversely, the modern state and its census grid could not but project the image of an unchangeably fixed order of society. One may wonder whether and how far the notion of a never-changing, utterly tradition-bound and stagnating India has been formed by the modern state's view of society."[82]

This outdated view of Hindu society as gnashing its teeth for thousands of years under an immutable Brahminical tyranny was the prevalent one in Dr. Ambedkar's day. While he himself had the intellectual stature to grow along with newer scholarship, his followers and those who brandish his name are needlessly perpetuating this outdated view of Indian history.

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[82] J.C. Heesterman: *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*. p.202.

A weak point in Dr. Ambedkar's career as a thinker, is his merciless pamphlet *Riddles in Hinduism*.[83] Here, his emotional bitterness against the indifference or hostility of the caste Hindus of his day, has driven him to a level of scandal-mongering which is rather unbecoming of a man of his stature. Much of it is a rehashing of the points mentioned above, esp. the absolute reduction of Hindu culture to a cover of caste and untouchability. That part was largely ignored by the public, because it was the type of thing which so many westernized writers and Christian missionaries had been saying for some time. The part which really caused offence, was the chapter *Riddles of Rama and Krishna*.

In this comment on the traditions of Rama and Krishna, Dr. Ambedkar shows no patience with human complexities. One example, he abhors Rama's words to Sita after he has defeated Ravana: "I have got you as a prize in a war after conquering my enemy your captor. I have recovered my honour and punished my enemy. People have witnessed my military prowess and I am glad my labours have been rewarded. I came here to kill Ravana and wash off the dishonour. I did not take this trouble for your sake... I suspect your conduct. You must have been spoiled by Ravana. Your very sight is revolting to me. Oh you daughter of Janaka, I allow you to go anywhere you like. I have nothing to do with you. I conquered you back and I am content for that was my object. I cannot think that Ravana would have failed to enjoy a woman as beautiful as you are." Along with Sita herself, Dr. Ambedkar thinks this is really mean.

However, the Ramayana is not a soap-opera. In the real world, this type of scene is more likely to happen than the purely idyllic sequence which, at that point in the story, you would get to see in a movie. A monogamous man who has reason to suspect that his wife has been taken by another man, be it willingly or even against her will, may very well be uncomfortable when after a long struggle, he comes face to face with the woman for whom he risked his life. He may very well put up a tough face, even a haughty and uninterested one. Nobody in the Ramayana is altogether good or bad, e.g. to an extent Sita has herself to blame for being kidnapped in the first place. Come to think of it, when Rama remembers that she was taken away by Ravana after having sent

[83] Republished as vol.4 in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches*.

her protector Lakshman away, wouldn't there be a sneaking suspicion that somehow she was not entirely innocent? That is what would go through a man's mind in real life, and the Hindu epics, eventhough full of miraculous episodes, are basically about real human beings; not about a puerile division in absolutely noble believers who will inherit heaven and earth, and wretched unbelievers doomed to slavery in this world and eternal damnation in the next.

For the rest, this pamphlet contains a lot of ordinary scandal-mongering. We learn that Rama's associates, the Vanaras, are conceived in general debauchery by the gods with all kinds of nymphs and goddesses and mortal women, and that Rama himself seems to have been conceived illegitimately by the sage Shrung on Kaushalya, wife of Dasharatha. Similar things are explicitly said about the Pandavas in the Mahabharata, and in more or less ambiguous terms about many worthies in the Vedic, Epic and Puranic lore. Krishna was the greatest lecher of his age, doing it with whole villages of girls and married women. So, that is the real truth on Hinduism for you.

The exercise can be tried on anyone, including the Buddha, and including Dr. Ambedkar himself. Indeed, one V.N. Utpat wrote a booklet *Riddles of Buddha and Ambedkar* in reply.[84] It points out that the the Buddha's conception was even more illegitimate than that of Rama and Krishna, and bestial on top of it: his mother was visited at night by (euphemism: "dreamed of") a white elephant. Heartless as he was, he left his wife and child behind without asking their opinion, to set out on his selfish quest for personal liberation. By giving up his throne, he also robbed his own son of the inheritance of the throne, and when later his son came to ask him for his rightful inheritance, the Buddha cynically offered him initiation into his miserable monk order. And so on: people (including the human being Gautama Shakyamuni) have to make choices in life, and in their decisions there will always be a dark side available for foul mouths to pick on.

It is not that there is no contrast between contemporary Hindu morality and the life-stories of Krishna and other epic heroes. But this very fact illustrates that the epic stories are not to be read as models to be emulated. At any rate, those episodes really have no

[84] V.N. Utpat: *Riddles of Buddha and Ambedkar*, Itihas Patrika Prakashan, Thane 1988.

bearing on the problems of the Untouchables and of other Hindus today.

5.8. Social programme of Buddhism

One of the most significant and influential acts of Dr. Ambedkar was his conversion, along with numerous followers, to Buddhism. The conversion ceremony took place on 2 October 1956 in Nagpur. Dr. Ambedkar repeated on this occasion what he had been saying for years: that only conversion could really change the social status of the lowest castes.

The explicit social-political motive for conversion invites an obvious criticism: that converting to another belief system for the sake of the concomitant social status is untruthful, unless one accepts that the social realization is a sufficient test of a belief system's truth or non-truth. Declaring that Mohammed was God's final personal spokesman, or that Jesus was God's only son and delivered us from eternal sin through his death and resurrection, simply because you expect a better social status from this declaration (even when you have received sufficient education to see through these belief systems), is simply untruthful. Similarly, rejecting the belief in reincarnation, not because you have found reasons to doubt or reject it, but because you attribute negative social effects to this belief, is untruthful. Embracing a doctrine not because you find it to be true but because you find it useful, is untruthful.

However, unlike many of his followers, Ambedkar did not convert to Buddhism merely because he found it useful. He did believe that Buddhism was the most rational and humane religious tradition, the best for all human beings, untouchables and touchables alike. He consequently rejected the opportunistic conversions to Islam and Christianity.

An additional reason for his choice of Buddhism was his belief that Buddhism had been the original religion of the Dalits. We have dealt with this theory of his in the previous chapter. Here, we only want to remark how this motive is in line with the approach of the Shuddhi movement for re-conversion of Muslim and Christian ex-Hindus to their ancestral religion: instead of "conversion", it is a "homecoming" (a *ghar-wapasi*, as the Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram calls its re-conversion ceremonies for christianized tribals).

Dr. Ambedkar's chief argument for Buddhism was that this was the only religion that did not in any way encourage or justify social

injustice. He especially liked the Buddha's protest against the caste system. The question is whether the social-reformist qualities which Ambedkar ascribed to the Buddha were not in the eye of the beholder.

In Sangharakshita's survey of the Buddhist canon, we do find a number of references to the subject of caste. These instances show that Buddhism was not meant as a social revolution, even when it was critical of caste inequality. Thus, in a list of parables from the *Digha*- and the *Majjhima-Nikaya*, we find the well-known simile: "Whether kindled by a priest, a warrior, a trader or a serf, from whatsoever type of fuel, a fire will emit light and heat; even so, all men, regardless of caste, are equally capable of the highest spiritual attainment."[85] Another instance is the famous story from the *Divyavadana*, of the noble monk Ananda and the outcaste girl Prakriti. The girl tries to seduce the monk, but through Buddha's miraculous intervention, her efforts are counterproductive, and it is she who follows the monk into the Sangha: she becomes a nun. But the public objects to the ordination of an outcaste, and so Buddha explains that caste divisions have no bearing on spiritual life.

The modern editor claims that Buddha "criticizes the whole theoretical basis of the brahminical caste structure". It is true that precisely the attempts to give a "whole theoretical basis" to the already established fact of caste (notably the Dharmashastras), unnecessarily extended caste distinction to beyond the mere social sphere. But what Buddha criticizes, in the Prakriti story and elsewhere, is not the existing social relations, but precisely the improper extension of caste division to the spiritual sphere, beyond the worldly sphere where social distinctions belong.[86] In yet another story, Buddha grills a Brahmin with Socrates-type questions to extract from him the insight that to be a Brahmin, or conversely to be unworthy of the practices of Arya Dharma, birth is not the criterion.

Many students of Buddhist history have noticed that Buddha's objectives were "not of this world". Sir W.W. Hunter has written: "It would be a mistake to suppose that Buddhism and Jainism were directed from the outset consciously in opposition to the caste system. Caste, in fact, at the time of the rise of Buddhism was only

[85] Sangharakshita: *The Eternal Legacy*, p.35.
[86] Sangharakshita: *ibid.*, p.63.

beginning to develop; and in later days, when Buddhism commenced its missionary careers, it took caste with it into regions where upto that time the institution had not penetrated."[87] Many others among the early Orientalists have confirmed this, from different angles.

Hermann Oldenberg explained how Buddha had other concerns than social reform: "Caste has no value for him, for everything earthly has ceased to affect his interests, but it never ocurs to him to exercise his influence for the abolition or for the mitigation of the severity of its rules for those who have lagged behind in the worldly surroundings."[88] R. Spencer Hardy wrote: "The existence of the four great tribes is recognized continually in the *Jatakas*, and inferiority of caste is recognized as giving rise to the same usages and as being attended with degradation."[89] Prof. Rhys Davids has given details about caste practices in over 100 Buddhist communities.[90]

D.D. Kosambi points out that in the recruitment of monks, the candidate's social position was not entirely disregarded: "...runaway slaves, savage tribesmen, escaped criminals, the chronically ill and the indebted as well as aboriginal Nagas were denied admission into the order."[91]

The encounter with worldly suffering (typified by an old man, a sick man and a corpse) had convinced Buddha to turn away from the world and to focus on spiritual exercises. The monks did not want to be disturbed with social problems, and the atmosphere they created for themselves in their monasteries was meant to focus their attention on their spiritual practice, not on the social needs of the laymen: "No rotting half-eaten corpse, no leprous beggar with festering sores mars the smooth harmony of sumptuous frescoes and reliefs to remind the monk of the Founder's doctrine. Nor does the art portray the normal hardships of the poorest villager, whose surplus the monk could eat, but whose misery was easily discounted on the callous theory that the suffering must have been deserved because of misdeeds in some previous birth."[92]

[87] W.W. Hunter: *Imperial Gazetteer* 1907; quoted in J. Kulkarni: *Historical Truths & Untruths Exposed*, p.27.
[88] H. Oldenberg: *Buddha* (republished 1971), p.154, quoted *ibid.*
[89] R. Spencer Hardy: *Manual of Buddhism* (1853), quoted *ibid.*, p.26.
[90] In *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1891-92, quoted *ibid.*
[91] In *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1891-92, quoted *ibid.*
[92] D.D, Kosambi: *op.cit.*, p.179.

In Kosambi's Marxist opinion, the spread of Buddhism had nothing to do with a liberating social message (a liberating spiritual message is of course beyond his thought-frame), but was due to the economic role of the monasteries: "The monasteries performed one of the tasks of the *chakravartin*, universal monarch, supposedly recommended by the Buddha, but nevertheless omitted by Ashoka when he built roads, resting-places, water reservoirs and public hospitals for man and beast. The accumulated monastic wealth often provided some of the capital so badly needed by early merchants and caravaneers in the Indian hinterland... It seems to me the main reason why Buddhism could grow for so many centuries after the ancient pastoral *yajna* against which it had protested so effectively had vanished under pressure of widely developed agrarian food production. This special economic function accounts in the main for the spread of Buddhism into the adjoining countries which... could hardly have loved for its own sake the intricate, rarified and virtually incomprehensible doctrine which a long line of distinguished Indian, Chinese, Tibetan and other monks translated so assiduously into several languages."[93]

More recently, i.e. after the political myth of Buddhism as an anti-caste movement became internationally popular, the Dutch Buddhologist Prof. Zürcher has written: "In modern popularizing writings, one often reads that 'egalitarian' Buddhism was essentially a 'protest movement' against the Brahminical caste system. It is true that the Buddhist view of caste is different from and more rational than the religious justification which one finds in Brahminism. But neither the Buddha himself, nor any pre-modern Buddhist teacher after him has combated the caste system. The explanation of the egalitarian attitude which we find in the *sangha*, is simple. Caste is a social distinction, which belongs in the world of the laity, where it is completely proper and self-evident. As soon as someone becomes a monk, he in principle steps completely out of the world. He renounces his family and family ritual, and therefore also the caste to which his family belongs. Like all other Indian ascetics inside and outside Buddhism, he is a complete 'outsider': for him, social distinctions — those of caste included — have not become objectionable, but meaningless."[94]

Buddhism's non-interest in social reform is also demonstrated

[93] D.D. Kosambi: *ibid.*, p.182-3.
[94] E. Zürcher: *Boeddhisme*, p.49.

by its career outside India. Everywhere it integrated itself into the existing social and political set-up, and there is no known case of any of these branches of Buddhism calling for social reform, let alone for a social revolution as far-reaching as the abolition of caste would have meant in India. After centuries of profound impact of Buddhism, Tibetan society was in such a state that the Chinese Communists could claim in 1950 that 95% of the Tibetans were living in slavery; not that we should accept this Communist propaganda, the place of subordinates in Tibetan society was not at all that of slaves, but fact is that Buddhism had not rendered Tibet's traditional feudalism any more egalitarian than it had been in the pre-Buddhist past.

Where slavery existed, Buddhism did not abolish it. From the very beginning, Buddhist monasteries continued the labour arrangements existing in society at large, including slavery. In his study on slavery in ancient India, Dev Raj Channa observes: "On reading the modern works concerning the Buddhist order in India one gains the impression that no slave labour was employed in the monasteries. One would be inclined to believe that all the work, even in the big monasteries like [those] of Kosambi or Rajagaha, was carried out by the monks themselves. However, a study of Pali literature shows clearly that the situation was otherwise."[95]

Before we look into the history itself, we may notice this contrast between the actual history of Buddhist social practice described in the original sources, and the more "progressive" picture given by modern writers, who fail to register the existence of slavery or at least serfdom in connection with the Buddhist monasteries. This trendy blindness for the less idealistic aspects of Buddhist history follows a general pattern. Except for some die-hard Christian missionaries, most Western authors of the last century have endeavoured to paint a positive picture of Buddhism, esp. in contrast with Brahminism. One reason for this pro-Buddhist bias was that Buddhism, esp. in its pre-idolatrous stage (Pali canon), looked less "Pagan" than Hinduism. It was also rendered more respectable by its foreign "conquests", similar to those of the Christian missionaries, esp. in civilized countries like the (formally non-colonized) Chinese empire and the fledgling industrial power Japan. At any rate, it was these Western pro-Buddhist renderings of Buddhist

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[95] Dev Raj Chanana: *Slavery in Ancient India*, p.81.

doctrine and history that have shaped Dr. Ambedkar's (and Jawaharlal Nehru's) view of Buddhism.

From the beginning, Buddhism shared the disdain for manual labour expressed by certain Brahminical and ancient Greek sources, which held that philosophical pursuits required a freedom from labour tasks. According to Chanana, this attitude to labour had not always existed in India to the same extent: "This attitude to manual work as an imposition is in contrast with the view expressed in an earlier epoch, in the Rgveda, where there is no expression of any dislike of manual work. This is, in part at least, due to the absence of the division of labour as seen in the well-known verse describing various jobs, intellectual and manual, undertaken by members of one and the same family."[96] In the case of Buddhism, however, "we must not forget that the Buddha, anxious to free his monks of material preoccupations, had forbidden almost all manual labour to them."[97]

Laymen, even of prominent families, are sometimes reported to join in manual labour benefiting the Buddhist Sangha, esp. in what is nowadays called ***kar seva***, personal participation in brick-laying for religious buildings. One of their motives for getting their hands dirty in this way, was that it earned them some small part of the merit which the monks would accumulate in these buildings by their spiritual practices; which was all the more reason to keep the monks exempt from labour tasks. When rulers started to donate land and other commodities to the Buddhist order, they also offered labour servants. A story in the *Vinaya* reports how a monk sought the explicit approval of the Buddha before effectively accepting the offer of 500 labourers, and Chanana argues that these were slave labourers.

Outside India, a number of independent sources confirm that Buddhist monasteries employed slaves: "There are numerous references to prove the existence of slaves in the Buddhist monasteries in China. Thus a sutra of the Tang dynasty bewails the regime in which goods belonging to the Sangha, including the 'slaves owned by the Three Jewels' are used by the administration. Elsewhere we learn that generally virgin lands and hilly tracts possessed by the monasteries were cultivated by their slaves whereas lands open to

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[96] Chanana: *ibid.*, p.59, with reference to Rgveda 9:112:3.

[97] Chanana: *ibid.*, p.82; in footnote, he aptly remarks the contrast with Christian monasticism, where, in the words of St. Benedict, "work is prayer".

normal irrigation were worked by a certain type of serfs. These slaves were normally in charge of the maintenance of the monasteries but could also be sent to aid the peasants at the time of ploughing, harvesting, etc. Public slaves and criminals used to be formed into groups and known as the 'families of the Buddha'. According to Gernet, other means of obtaining slaves were purchase and slave-raising. The situation was similar in Ceylon..."[98]

Apart from slave-owning, the monasteries also upheld milder forms of social inequality. In China, they were feudal landlords, and under the Tang dynasty the Sangha was even the biggest landowner in the empire, until it was expropriated (in what has been mis-termed the "Buddhist persecution") because its tax-exempt status disrupted the economy. Further, it goes without saying that the traditional inequality between men and women was fully accepted: nuns were always lower in rank than monks. Buddhism cannot be considered a pioneer of modern egalitarianism in any respect.

Buddhism's lack of interest in social reform was implicitly admitted by Dr. Ambedkar himself, when as Law Minister he defended the inclusion of Buddhists in the category of citizens to whom the Hindu Code Bill would apply. He declared: "When the Buddha differed from the Vedic Brahmins, he did so only in matters of creed, but left the Hindu legal framework intact. He did not propound a separate law for his followers."[99]

The philosophical basis for Buddha's acceptance of social inequality was not different from the Hindu one. Like the Babylonian law-giver Hammurabi, like Kautilya, and like Mohammed, Buddha wanted the masters to treat their slaves well. As important as the *agnihotra* sacrifice is the satisfaction of one's dependents, including the *dasa-kammakaras* ("slave-workdoers"). Buddha was very matter-of-fact in justifying the need to treat slaves well: he says that in a house where, among others, the *dasa-kammakaras* do not get their food on time, the work is not done properly and losses are the result, while on the other hand, a satisfied slave or servant is an asset.[100] The point is that, like the other ancient law-givers mentioned above, Buddha does not order the masters to set the slaves free, nor the slaves to revolt against their masters. As a practitioner

[98] Chanana: *ibid.*, p.85-86.
[99] D. Keer: *Ambedkar*, p.427.
[100] Chanana: *op.cit.*, p.61.

of non-violence, he did not want to disrupt the existing order.

To the slaves, he gave the same justification of their condition as is always scornfully attributed to Hinduism. Dev Raj Chanana summarizes: "On the other hand he advised the slaves to bear patiently with their lot and explained the same as follows. If a person is born a slave, it is the consequence of some bad acts of an earlier life and the best way for him is to submit willingly to his lot. He should submit to all sorts of treatment at the hands of his master and should never allow any feeling of revenge to grow within himself, even if the other should try to kill him. In such cases, a change of destiny is promised to the slave in the next birth. He is promised the status of a god with all the comforts that go with it. In case, however, such a person is lucky enough to obtain manumission from his master, he may obtain ordination and thus try to secure salvation from the cycle of transmigration, i.e. release from the slavery of life and death."[101]

So, the same allegation of using the karma doctrine as an opium for the people to keep them happy in their submission, can be levelled against the Buddha as well as against Hinduism in general: "That he derived his conclusion from the widely accepted belief in the theory of karma, of the retribution of acts, need not be stressed again and again. To him and his followers birth in a particular group was the consequence of certain good or evil acts. Since the retribution was believed to be inexorable, unvarying, like the working of a machine, he could not but advocate complete submission to one's destiny... we may agree that the Buddha (from what we learn about him in the Tipitaka) sincerely believed in [karma]. But even from this angle it is clear that disobedience on the part of a slave or servant was considered as an evil act. The same view was held of bad treatment on the part of a master."[102] To the extent that he had to pronounce opinions on social matters at all, Buddha was a paternalist rather than a reformer.

What can we practically conclude from this demythologization of Buddha as a social reformer? That Buddha is yet another false prophet, that he is yet another opium-dealer for the people, that along with Brahmins and the rest he too should be thrown on the dungheap of religious history? Not quite.

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[101] Chanana: *ibid.*
[102] Chanana, *ibid.*, p.62.

Buddha was not a Mr. Know-all. He was competent on the practice of meditation, and on some philosophy surrounding this practice. On other things, his meditative practice may well have sharpened his power of observation and common sense, but generally he shared the notions of his contemporaries without making an extraordinary innovation. On social reform, Buddha cannot be our guru. And so, if perforce you want to be a follower of Buddha, you have to stay away from issues of social reform. But if you do want to dabble in social reform issues, then accept that you will have to get your ideas elsewhere, starting with your own independent reasoning power (that you have to think and to check things for yourself, is a piece of advice of Buddha which is relevant in most fields, but it is hardly his unique "intellectual property").

As per the Buddha's own injunction to seek the truth for yourself, we should outgrow the status of "followers", even of "followers of Buddha". While his teachings on meditation remain a milestone, we may perfectly ignore his opinions on other issues. In the centre of our endeavour should not be Buddha, except insofar as he represents the truth; which he does in important aspects of religion. Similarly, Hindus (and their enemies) should stop quoting Gandhiji, or Swami Vivekananda, or indeed Dr. Ambedkar, with an air of finality as if the master's word is automatically to be accepted as valid. No mortal is so complete as to know everything on everything, and that is why the centre of a civilization should not be a person (Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha; with apologies to Dr. Ambedkar for this undifferentiated juxtaposition), but the supra-personal notion of the truth (*satya*), or the norm (*dharma*). It is in that sense that a cosmic and timeless tradition, Sanatana Dharma, is in principle superior to these person-centred traditions.

The claim that anything can be superior to anything else will sound like a curse to the sentimentalist vendors of the message that "all religions are equal and essentially the same", but we need not bother about them. That anything can be superior to Buddhism, may well be resented by Buddhists. But then, I have not really said that. It all depends on whether one takes the follower's or the master's position.

The follower depicts the Buddha as a unique person who replaced the era of darkness with the Buddhist era of light (the view modelled on the self-image of the prophetic-monotheist religions): in that case, disappointment is certain to follow, because the mas-

ter, as a limited human being, will prove to be deficient in some respect or other (e.g. the Buddha on social reform). But the master, the Buddha himself (and everyone who resolves, like the Buddha, to find out the truth for himself), did not take such a narrow person-centred view. He believed that he was walking an ancient path, trodden by so many Buddhas before him as well as after him, and that he was just one voice speaking the eternal truths on some matters of eternal importance; he did not claim to undo all that had gone before, nor to refute all the earlier teachings, much less to overrule all that was being said by others on other matters than those on which he was competent. In that sense, Buddha was himself an exponent of Sanatana Dharma.

Sanatana Dharma is *apaurusheya*, impersonal: at the centre is the truth, rather than a person. When monotheists try to rationalize their iconoclasm, they say that idols are finite things wrongly taking the place of the infinite. If that is true, then idol-smashing would be a good thing. It would mean that the mental idols, consisting of the individual utterances and life-stories of individuals have to be removed from our minds, to make way for the infinite. It means that these historical persons like Jesus and Mohammed, who have filled up the religious consciousness of so many people, and conditioned them with their *paurusheya*, idiosyncratic "revelations", should be put aside for a while, to make way for the infinite.

Now, Buddhists have to decide for themselves on what side they are: do they consider Buddha as the exclusive and all-purpose saviour, the one person who has made all the difference? Or do they merely consider him as a guide to the infinite, an infinite which cannot be limited to the exclusive revelation of one historical person? The first option is indeed that of many Buddhists, viz.of those who insist on the "separate identity" of Buddhism. The second one is that of the Buddha himself, who never left any doubt that his path was universal, *apaurusheya*.

5.9. Conversion to Buddhism

On 2 October 1956, Dr. Ambedkar led several lakhs of followers into conversion to Buddhism. He extracted twenty-two promises from his followers. We will give them here divided in two groups.

Firstly, the genuine expression of commitment to the Buddhist way:

7. I will never act against the tenets of Buddhism;
11. I will follow the Eight-fold Path of Lord Buddha;
12. I will follow the ten Paramitas of the Dhamma;
13. I will have compassion on all living beings and will try to look after them;
14. I will not lie;
15. I will not commit theft;
16. I will not indulge in lust or sexual transgression;
17. I will never take any liquor or drink that causes intoxication;
18. I will try to mould my life in accordance with the Buddhist preachings based on Enlightenment, precept and compassion;
20. I firmly believe that the Bauddha Dhamma is the best religion;
21. I believe that today I am taking a new birth;
22. I solemnly take the oath that from today onwards I will act according to the Bauddha Dhamma.

It is debatable whether the "firm belief that the Bauddha Dhamma is the best religion" was ever part of the resolutions taken by the Buddha's disciples, but let us not pick on this and accept that these promises by Ambedkar's followers are just an emphatic expression of their entry into Buddhism. A different story are those promises that articulated Ambedkar's own social and anti-Hindu agenda:

1. I will not regard Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as gods nor will I worship them;
2. I will not regard Rama and Krishna as gods nor will I worship them;
3. I will not accept Hindu deities like Gauri, Ganapati etc., nor will I worship them;
4. I do not believe that God has taken birth or incarnation in any form;
5. I do not believe that Lord Buddha was the incarnation of Vishnu, I believe this propaganda is mischievous and false;
6. I will never perform any *Shraaddha* nor will I offer any *Pinda* (i.e. Brahminical funeral and post-funeral rites);
8. I will not have any *Samskara* (ritual) performed by Brahmins;
9. I believe in the principle that all are equal;
10. I will try to establish equality;

19. I embrace today the Bauddha Dhamma, discarding the Hindu religion which is detrimental to the emancipation of human beings and which believes in inequality and regards human beings other than Brahmins as low-born.

This list of promises is unique in the history of Buddhism, in that it not only professes to follow the Buddhist way, but also attacks a non-Buddhist tradition, including the devotion to a number of gods whose worship was propagated outside India by Buddhism itself.

Ambedkar was seriously criticized by authentic Buddhists for mixing Buddhism with a message of hatred and separatism (even apart from mixing it with a well-intentioned message of social reform). Dhananjay Keer, an outspoken admirer of Ambedkar, reports: "The *Mahabodhi*, a famous Buddhist journal in India, opined that *The Buddha and his Dhamma* is a dangerous book. Ambedkar's interpretation of the theory of *karma*, the theory of *ahimsa* and his theory that Buddhism was merely a social system, constituted not the correct interpretation of Buddhism but a new orientation. Indeed the whole of the book, observed the reviewer, explained the hatred and aggressiveness the neo-Buddhist nourished and displayed. 'Ambedkar's Buddhism', added the reviewer, 'is based on hatred, the Buddha's on compassion'... The title, pleaded the reviewer, should be changed from *The Buddha and his Dhamma* to that of *Ambedkar and his Dhamma*; for Ambedkar preached non-Dhamma as Dhamma for motives of political and social reform."[103]

Another paper, *The Light of Dhamma* (Rangoon), observed that "although this was a book by a great man, unfortunately it was not a great book". Dhananjay Keer reports: "The reviewer pointed out that the great Doctor tampered with the texts and whenever he found views in Buddhism inconvenient to his own, denounced them as later accretions made by monks. The author was nevertheless a great and good man; the tragedy was that it was neither a great book nor a good book, concluded the reviewer."[104]

After the violent desecration of the Shivalingam shrine at Bodh Gaya by Ambedkarite Buddhists on 16 May 1992, the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to India, Mr. Neville Kanakaratne, prepared a confidential report for his government. He writes that Chief Minis-

[103] D. Keer: *op.cit.*, p.521, with reference to *Mahabodhi*, December 1959.
[104] D. Keer: *ibid.*, with reference to *The Light of Dhamma*, January 1959.

ter Laloo Prasad Yadav (who openly sympathized with the anti-Hindu vandals) had announced a decision to introduce a new bill in the legislative assembly on the control of the Bodh Gaya shrine "for political reasons", viz. to win the support of the Ambedkarites. He expects a hardening of attitudes "on Hindu and anti-Hindu lines", and advises his government and the non-governmental Buddhist organizations to stay out of the controversy. He notes the "regrettable fact" that a great majority of Indian Buddhists were members of the Scheduled Castes who converted under Dr. Ambedkar's leadership in order to assert their political rights "rather than through honest self-persuasion and conviction". By contrast, the effort by the Mahabodhi Society to spread Buddhism through proper information and teaching had achieved "very little", according to the Sri Lankan High Commissioner.[105]

The High Commissioner should take heart from the Christian and Muslim experience with conversion. When people convert for non-religious reasons, be it force or social pressure or material incentives, it usually takes time, even generations, before they become true and convinced adherents. But that doesn't matter: expose them to the atmosphere of the religion, and gradually it will create an impression on their minds. In the case of neo-Buddhism, I don't mean this suggestion to be sarcastic. If you just let people who have declared themselves Buddhists for political reasons sit down and study Buddhism, they will get the proper message out of it in time. At this juncture, India can do with a dose of Buddhism, and I am sure that out of the politically Buddhist community, centres of genuine spiritual Buddhism will evolve.

5.10. Buddhist communalism

As we have seen, Dr. Ambedkar believed in a long-term and large-scale conflict between Brahminism and Buddhism, lasting from the 3rd century BC to the 12th century AD. The way he went about his own conversion was bound to revive this supposed centuries-old antagonism, at least at the ideological level. It has in effect contributed to the genesis of what one might call Buddhist communalism. In imitation of the temple/mosque controversies, the neo-Buddhist movement has tried to create controversies over certain temples. It got the idea from the pro-Islamic polemists who

[105] *Times of India*, 30/6/1992.

have tried to neutralize the Hindu arguments against Islam by alleging that Hinduism has its own history of systematic temple destruction, with Buddhist buildings as its main target. From the comfort of their armchairs, they have been discovering Buddhist *stupas* and *viharas* under every Hindu temple that lies ruined underneath a mosque, to "balance" the Hindu indignation over Islamic temple destruction. They have yet to come forward with the first proof of a Buddhist temple destroyed by Hinduism.

The Ambedkarite neo-Buddhists have lately started a movement for the "liberation of the Mahabodhi shrine". Its aim is to remove the statutory four Hindu members of the temple management committee, and to prohibit worship of a shivalingam in the temple (much in contrast to the calls for "composite culture" and for multi-religious worship at the Ram Janmabhoomi site). These demands are not unreasonable, and can be fulfilled by a normal process of negotiation, without the agitation and vandalism with which the neo-Buddhists have already desecrated their own holiest shrine in October 1992.

The controversy has been presented by certain "secularists" as comparable to Ayodhya, eventhough Hindus never destroyed the temple, never took it from the Buddhists (Shaiva monks took charge of the Bodh Gaya premises in 1590, after centuries of disuse), have handed it back for Buddhist worship, and are not interfering with Buddhist practices there.[106] More than that, a Buddhist member of the Bodh Gaya temple management committee admits that "the laudable work of the construction of the Mahabodhi temple" was "undertaken by a Brahmana minister of Shaivite persuasion".[107] This information was originally furnished by the Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang (Hiuen Tsang), who saw the temple in AD 637, shortly after it was built, and who explicitly gave the credit to a Brahmin worshipper of Shiva Maheshwara. Not only did Brahmins refrain from demolishing the temple, but they actually built it (by contrast, Babur cannot be accused of building Rama temples).

In Bodh Gaya, Xuan Zang also stayed in the Mahabodhi Sangharama, a "splendid monastery" with "1000 monks", which had been built, at the Sri Lankan king Meghavarmana's request, under the auspices of Samudragupta, the leading light of the Gupta dynasty. Though the Gupta dynasty is often identified with a sup-

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[106] The full story is told in Dipak K. Barua: *Buddha Gaya Temple and its History*.
[107] Dipak K. Barua: *Buddha Gaya Temple, Its History*, p.41.

posed "Brahminical reaction against Buddhism", Bodh Gaya has a large number of dated sculptures from the Gupta period, which was in fact one of the most fruitful periods in Buddhist art.[108]

It is true that some Buddhist temples have been *converted* into (not demolished and replaced by) Hindu temples. When Buddhism lost its patrons and its popular support, Buddhist temples were turned into Vishnu temples by their own users. The already common identification of Buddha as one of Vishnu's incarnations was further sanctioned by Shankaracharya's campaign to strengthen the pluralist Vedic tradition (symbolized by the five gods worshipped in mainstream Hindu temples and by the members of Shankaracharya's order) against sectarian heterodoxy. When the Muslims finally killed all the Buddhist monks and destroyed their institutions, the Buddhist teachings were no longer passed on, the common people forgot about Buddha, and so they stopped worshipping Buddha except as one of Vishnu's incarnations.

In fact, while Hinduism has received from Islam nothing but murder and destruction, Buddhism owes a lot to Hinduism. Apart from its very existence, it has received from Hinduism toleration, alms by Hindu laymen, sons and daughters of Hindus to fill its monasteries and nunneries, land grants and funding by Hindu rulers, protection by Hindu rulers against lawlessness and against the Islamic invaders between the mid-7th and the late 12th century. In many cases, Buddhist temples formed part of large pluralist temple-complexes, and Hindu codes of art and architecture dealt with Buddha on a par with Shiva and other objects of depiction and worship.[109]

It is therefore no surprise that non-Buddhist Hindus have traditionally worshipped at Bodh Gaya, even during the heyday of Buddhism. Prof. Benimadhab Barua reports that "concerning the right of the Hindus to worship the Buddha-image Dharmeshwara, the Bo-tree Ashvatta in the Bodh-Gaya temple and its sacred area, we have noticed that as far back as the Kushana age it is enjoined in the Epic version of the earlier Eulogium that every pious Hindu visiting Gaya should make it a point to go also to Dharmaprastha or Bodh-Gaya and have a sacred touch of the Buddha image of the

[108] Reported in Abdul Quddoos Ansari: *Archaeological Remains of Bodhgaya*, p.15.

[109] E.g. Varahamihira: *Brihatsamhita*, ch.57,59.

place. The later Eulogium in the Puranas enjoins in the same manner that every Hindu pilgrim to the Gaya region desiring to release the departed spirits of his ancestors must visit also Bodh Gaya to pay his respectful homage to the Buddha image Dharmeshvara as well as the Bo-tree Ashvatta..."[110]

Even while arguing against the Shaivite Mahant, who was (in league with the British who feared Japanese interference) obstructing the implementation of a Hindu-Buddhist settlement worked out by the Hindu Mahasabha (and turned into law shortly after independence: Bodh Gaya Temple Act, 1949), Prof. Benimadhab Barua admits: "So far as our information goes, the Buddhists have never and nowhere prevented the Hindus from either visiting or conducting worship at their shrines. As a matter of fact, they have no case against the Hindu devotees coming to a Buddhist shrine for worship. Their shrines remain open to all for worship, without any distinction of caste and creed. The inscription of Keshava, engraved during the reign of Dharmapala, clearly proves that the Buddhists were liberal and tolerant enough even to allow a Hindu to instal a figure of his deities, Shiva and Brahma, in their temple at Bodh-Gaya (Dharmesha-ayatane) for the benefit of the resident Shaivite Brahmins."[111]

Whether the Brahmin control of the Mahabodhi area since the 16th century upto 1949 was similar in nature to the Muslim control of the Ram Janmabhoomi site during the same period, can perhaps best be decided after considering this statement by a Muslim scholar, Dr. Abdul Qudoos Ansari: "The iconoclastic fury of Islam must have [had] a terrible effect on the shrines of the Gaya region, and particularly on Buddhism, with the result that a time came when, there being no Buddhists to look after their own shrines and worship at Bodh Gaya, the Brahmins had to do their work even by going [outside] their jurisdiction."[112] Though he gratuitously (but plausibly) accuses the Brahmin management of "the sin of greed", he does not accuse them of any destruction or forcible take-over, which makes a radical difference with the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid scenario.

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[110] B.M. Barua: "Bodh-Gaya from Buddhist Point of View and Bodh-Gaya from Hindu Point of View", app.2 in D.K. Barua: *op.cit.*, p.267. The article is a reprint of an older publication, of which no date is given, but which seems to be related to his *Gaya and Buddha-Gaya*, 1934.

[111] *ibid.*, p.268-269.

[112] A.Q. Ansari: *op.cit.*, p.119.

Dr. Ansari's testimony against Islam rather than against Brahmanism as being the destroyer of Buddhism in India is doubly strong because otherwise he is a subscriber to the now-popular theory of an intense Buddhist-Brahminical antagonism. Thus, after relating that according to the Tibetan pilgrim Dharmaswami (1234-36 in Bodh Gaya and the nearby capital Vajrasana), "the Buddhists had put up an image of Shiva at Vajrasana in front of the Buddha image in order to protect it from the wrath of the non-Buddhists", he adds as his interpretation: "This would indicate that Brahminical opposition to Buddhism was a factor to be reckoned with in this region."[113] As further proofs of this antagonism, all he has to show is a depiction of the Vishnu Dashavatar series in which His incarnation as the Buddha is missing, and for the Buddhist side, a more explicit statement, viz. "the images of some of their gods shown as humiliating the Hindu deities". He has no information on temple destructions, idol-breaking, massacres etc., only an artistic act of disrespect (and that only on the Buddhist side: no Hindu art is known to depict gods humiliating the Buddha).

However, the context which he also relates, gives the impression that a more serious and less artistic fanaticism was troubling the Buddhists of Bodh Gaya: the then king Buddhasena (the last but one independent ruler in the area) had "fled into the forest on the outskirts of Gaya on the approach of the Turkish raiders but returned soon after withdrawal". Dharmaswami himself "had to flee away for seventeen days, owing to the [apprehension of] the attack of the Turks", and king Buddhasena, "not able to provide protection", also "escaped into the forest for fear of the Turks". It seems that the Turks didn't show up, because given their record elsewhere (as at nearby Nalanda), it would have been a miracle that the Mahabodhi temple survived. In fact, it was the temple's good fortune that the living Buddhist presence there had practically disappeared by the time the area passed into Muslim hands. Already in Dharmaswami's time, decades before the Muslim take-over, all students and pilgrims and lay Buddhists had stopped coming to the area: "According to Dharmaswami, the Bodh Gaya establishment had been deserted by all except for [some] monks, on account of the repeated Turkish conquests."[114] The popular support base and the training-grounds for Buddhist monks were

[113] *ibid.*, p.25.
[114] *ibid.*, p.26.

being destroyed in all of North India, and Bodh Gaya was dying as a Buddhist centre along with all those other establishments that were being physically destroyed by the Muslims.

So, the Shiva statue which the Buddhists in Dharmaswami's time put up to protect Buddha images from "the wrath of the non-Buddhists", has done a marvellous job by keeping at least the Mahabodhi temple intact in spite of the iconoclastic "wrath" of the invading "non-Buddhists" all around. In that light, it is a bit ungrateful on the part of the neo-Buddhists to demand the removal of the *Shivalingam* from the Mahabodhi temple.

The movement for the "liberation" of the Mahabodhi temple is formally led by a Japanese monk, Bhadant Arya Nagarjuna Surai Sasai. This valiant *samurai* provides a typical example of how people attack the weak and avoid the strong. Buddhism is not oppressed or endangered in India. It is not obstructed in worshipping at its traditional sacred sites, including the Mahabodhi temple, which Hindus have voluntarily cleared for Buddha worship. India provides shelter to one of the foremost Buddhist leaders, the Dalai Lama, and has sanctioned the creation of a network of Buddhist monasteries and institutes, including a Tibetan-Buddhist university in Sarnath. It houses the nerve centres of international Buddhist schools and institutes, such as S.N. Goenka's Vipassana organization. It is, moreover, one of the few countries where most non-Buddhist religious personalities have a sincere respect for Buddha and his Dhamma. And yet, of all countries, India is the one where Arya Sasai has to liberate Buddhism.

Meanwhile, much closer to his homeland, Buddhism is under constant attack in South Korea. Christian missionaries and native converts have elbowed Buddhism out of its traditional position of honour in Korean society. Buddhist temples have been converted into Christian churches. Christians have cornered political power and use it to thwart Buddhist life by all means. I know of Korean Buddhist monks who have applied for Indian citizenship on the plea that the Christians make it impossible for them to function in Korea. In other countries of East Asia, including Japan, there is also intense Christian missionary activity aimed at blowing Buddhism away, though less successfully than in Korea. While there is a revival of Buddhist activity in Mongolia and Cambodia, the situation in North Korea, China and Tibet remains grim. In Bangladesh, the Buddhist Chakmas are driven out by the Islamic population and

government. But it seems that Buddhist communalists prefer non-issues like the members' list of a temple management committee to the defence of the Dhamma where it is actually threatened in its very existence. If they want to claim back Buddhist places of worship at all, they can have their fill of liberation campaigns in Central Asia, where every single Buddhist establishment was destroyed by Islam, mostly to be buried under mosques and ziarats.

Arya Sasai has written a letter to *Dalit Voice*, in which he reports on his campaign: "On October 14 [1992], a big rally was held at the Boat Club, New Delhi, and over 3 lakh Buddhists of India and foreign countries attended it. December 6 was the 36th death anniversary of our beloved saviour, Bodhisattva B.R. Ambedkar, and liberator of the downtrodden. On the same day Hindu Nazis wounded our hearts by their violent aggression on Babri Masjid. We condemned this action as the Nazis have deliberately chosen the day to wound us."[115]

Look at that self-centred paranoia, to believe that 6 December, known to insiders as Dr. Ambedkar's death anniversary, was "deliberately chosen" for no other purpose than "to wound us". And look at the tendency to reduce the whole world to his own petty little concern and refuse to see how others may have similar concerns: both Buddhists and other Hindus have suffered immensely under the Islamic onslaught, which both destroyed the Ayodhya temple and annihilated the Buddhist establishment running the Mahabodhi temple, and yet this Buddhist crusader shows no trace of solidarity with non-Buddhists who suffered the same persecution as the Buddhists. While no Hindu is denying the Buddhists the right to worship at their own sacred site, Muslims do want to re-occupy the Hindus' sacred site at Ayodhya, so the Rama worshippers are assaulted much more in their religious rights than the Buddha worshippers. But this Arya Sasai's petty selfishness has no eye for the Hindu position, and would rather support Muslims who in Ayodhya are trying to do exactly that of which he accuses the Hindus in the case of Bodh Gaya: occupying another tradition's sacred site and denying to worshippers the right to their own most sacred shrine.

A real samurai does not content himself with tall talk, he is prepared for some action: "Upto now I have followed the path of

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[115] *Dalit Voice*, 1/2/1993.

Buddha to solve this problem peacefully but from now on, I think, I must follow the Hindu Nazi pattern as on Ayodhya." This seems to mean that he is threatening to leave the path of the Buddha, and to demolish the disputed structure, i.e. the Mahabodhi temple.

Arya Sasai could render a fine service to his religion, and also to his generous host country India, by going out to reclaim for Buddhism the people of East Bengal, whose Buddhist ancestors were pressured into becoming Muslims. He would thereby fulfil a part of Dr. Ambedkar's dream: to bring the Indian castes that were once Buddhist back to the Dhamma of their ancestors. But unlike the Bodh Gaya tug-of-war, this would need courage.

5.11. Comparison of Hinduism and Buddhism

Dr. Ambedkar intended his conversion to Buddhism to be seen, both by his followers and by outsiders, as a breakaway from Hinduism. Two generations later, the Ambedkarite neo-Buddhists are finding that those who have taken up the study and practice of Buddhism in right earnest, are very close to those Hindus who are serious about their Yogic and Vedantic path. The Hindu leader Veer Savarkar had called Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism "a sure jump into the Hindu fold", and now the political Ambedkarites are dismayed to find that indeed the religiously inclined members of the neo-Buddhist community are effectively moving closer to the Hindu mainstream.

There is, esp. between Savarkarite "Hindu communalists" and Ambedkarite "Buddhist communalists", a lot of heated discussion about whether Buddhism is a part of Hinduism or not. There is indeed room for doubt about the Hindu or un-Hindu inspiration in the basic doctrines of Buddhism (largely equivalent to the doubts about the exact meaning of the term *Hindu*). But what cannot honestly be doubted, is that, after its establishment as a separate sect, Buddhism has continually moved closer to its Puranic or "Tantric" surroundings. Tibetan Buddhism, a fairly late offshoot of Indian Mahayana Buddhism, is very close to Hinduism in many respects. But in Japanese Buddhism too, we find many practices that are not traditionally Japanese nor Buddhist in the strictest sense, but that have been carried along by Buddhism as a part of its Hindu heritage, e.g. the fire ceremony (like the Vedic sacrifice, it is called "feeding the gods") of the Shingon sect.

Sir John Woodroffe observed: "There are then based on this

common foundation three main religions, Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism. Of the second, a great and universal faith, it has been said that, with each fresh acquirement of knowledge, it seems more difficult to separate it from the Hinduism out of which it emerged and into which (in Northern Buddhism) it relapsed. This is of course not to say that there are no differences between the two, but that they share in certain general and common principles as their base."[116]

A host of Hindu gods, from the highest to the lowest, found a place in Buddhist tradition: "Pali records started by making Indra and Brahma respectful hearers of the original Buddhist discourses. The Mahayana admitted a whole new pantheon of gods including Ganesha, Shiva and Vishnu, all subordinated to the Buddha. A few select goddesses found their way into this company, like the dazzlingly beautiful Tara and the mother goddess Hariti, who had originally been a child-eating demoness. Charms (*dharani*) to be recited against snakes and demons entered the canon. At the same time, many an abbey had its own respected patron *naga* snake-demon."[117]

Even if Buddhism originally constituted a break-away from the established religion in some aspects, it was inevitable that it would assimilate much of Hinduism, for the simple reason that it recruited its monks in a Hindu environment: "From the very beginning the Order contained Brahmins who might have renounced caste but retained their intellectual traditions. The current Brahmin ideology (not ritual or cults) was often taken for granted, just as the Brahmins had given up beef-eating and accepted non-killing (*ahimsa*) as their main philosophy. The higher philosophies of both Buddhist and Brahmin began to converge in essence."[118]

With that, we have only said that Buddhism has been influenced by Hinduism. If it is merely a question of influence, then the neo-Buddhists could emphasize the separate identity of Buddhism by "purifying Buddhism of its accretions" (a kind of Buddhist *tabligh* campaign). The more important question is therefore whether there is a fundamental doctrinal kinship between Hinduism and Buddhism, such that Buddhism can be described as merely one branch of Hinduism.

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[116] John Woodroffe (originally under pseudonym Arthur Avalon): *Shakti and Shakta* (Dover Publ. New York 1978 (1918)), p.5.
[117] Kosambi: *op.cit.*, p.179.
[118] Kosambi: *ibid.*

At the spiritual level, Buddhism is very much a member of the Hindu family. A few weeks after Dr. Ambedkar's mass-conversion, Prof. V.S. Jha, vice-chancellor of Benares Hindu University, wrote the preface to the book *Buddhism and Hinduism* by Gurusevak Upadhyaya, "who reminds Hindu readers, in particular, of the Brahmanical roots of Buddhism on the one hand and its impact on the shaping of Hinduism throughout the centuries, on the other" — obviously in reply to Ambedkar's rejection of Hinduism for Buddhism. The BHU vice-chancellor gave as his own judgment that "the essential message of the Buddha constitutes not a 'different' religion but forms an integral part of Hinduism itself, supplying to it the dynamism needed for continuous self-criticism and self-purification". He quoted Mahatma Gandhi's view that "Gautama was himself a Hindu of Hindus... Buddha never rejected Hinduism, but he broadened its base. He gave it a new life and a new interpretation."

Many authorities can be quoted to the same effect. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has written: "Buddhism is only a later phase of the general movement of thought of which the Upanishads were earlier [expressions]. Buddha did not look upon himself as an innovator, but only a restorer of the way of the Upanishads."[119] Even Dr. Rhys Davids, who conformed to the modern interpretation of Buddhism as original and subversive, observed: "We should never forget that Gautama was born and brought up a Hindu and lived and died a Hindu. His teaching, far-reaching and original as it was, and really subversive of the religion of the day, was Indian throughout... He was the greatest and wisest and best of the Hindus."[120]

Ananda Coomaraswamy does more than just assert this essential unity, but sums it up in a few lines: "There is no true opposition of Buddhism and Brahmanism, but from the beginning one general movement, or many closely related movements. The integrity of Indian thought, moreover, would not be broken if every specifically Buddhist element were omitted; we should only have to say that certain details had been less adequately elaborated or less emphasized... [The Buddha] in a majority of fundamentals does not differ from the Atmanists, although he gives a far clearer statement of the law of causality as the essential mark of the world of Becom-

[119] Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy*, vol.2, p.469, quoted in Kulkarni: *op.cit.*, p.26.

[120] Rhys-Davids: *Buddhism*, p.116-117, quoted in D. Keer: *op.cit.*, p.522.

ing. The greater part of his polemic, however, is wasted in a misunderstanding."[121] The misunderstanding concerns the seeming opposition between the Upanishadic notion of Self (Atman) and the Buddhist notion of Non-Self (Anatman), which will be analyzed below.

The central point of agreement is non-attachment: "Implicit in Brahman thought from an early period,... and forming the most marked features of later Indian mysticism — achieved also in the Mahayana, but with greater difficulty — is the conviction that ignorance is maintained only by attachment, and not by such actions as are void of purpose and self-reference; and the thought that This and That world, Becoming and Being, are seen to be one by those in whom ignorance is destroyed. In this identification there is effected a reconciliation of religion with the world, which remained beyond the grasp of Theravada Buddhists. The distinctions between early Buddhism and Upanishadic Brahmanism, however practically important, are thus merely temperamental; fundamentally there is absolute agreement that bondage consists in the thought of I and Mine, and that this bondage may be broken only for those in whom all craving is extinct. In all essentials Buddhism and Brahmanism form a single system."[122]

It is not my intention to just over-awe the reader with quantity of quotations. After all, a similar number of quotations could be given to the opposite effect. Thus, David J. Kalupahana claims an originality for Buddhism which does set it apart from the Hindu tradition, and rejects the above-mentioned opinions: "Hindu scholars writing on Buddhism made such statements as this: 'Early Buddhism is not an absolutely original doctrine. It is no freak in the evolution of Indian thought.' But even a more sober scholar from the West felt that 'Buddhism started from special Indian beliefs, which it took for granted. The chief of these were the belief in transmigration and the doctrine of retribution of action... They were already taken for granted as a commonly accepted view of life by most Indian religions.'"

Kalupahana calls these views "unhistorical", "uncritical" and "superficial"; and by implication, he calls them "not sober", and Buddhism "a freak in the evolution of Hindu thought". He claims that Buddha did not borrow anything from the existing tradition,

[121] A. Coomaraswamy: *Buddha & the Gospel of Buddhism*, p.220.
[122] *ibid.*, p.221.

but "personally verified" the law of ***karma*** through his own "clear paranormal clairvoyant vision".[123]

It is easy to find the flaw in Kalupahana's reasoning: Buddha's "paranormal clairvoyance" is all very well (though the occultish terminology does injustice to the Buddha), but it only constitutes orginality if he was the first one to have this vision. A good student of physics will "personally verify" the laws of electromagnetism through experiment, but that does not make him their discoverer. Even the accomplished physicist who does a Nobel-Prize-winning discovery, will add only little, relatively speaking, to the existing knowledge; and he will most certainly acknowledge that he had "only reached that height because he had stood on the shoulders of giants" (after Newton). If we soberly consider the history of thought, we can hardly find anything that was totally original. On the contrary, we find the best minds struggling a lifetime to add just one brick to the building of tradition. The notion of anything "absolutely original" is entertained only by uneducated outsiders; insiders make sure to know their classics well.

The myth of something "absolutely original" has been popularized in the prophetic religions. For them, their prophet suddenly gets a revelation of something no man can attain through his own effort, a superhuman message from God Himself, absolutely original. This divine revelation is, of course, out of all proportion to human wisdom, totally incomparable. Apologists of these religions have spent a lot of energy on refuting the indications that their "revealed" scriptures can be traced to human influences, such as earlier schools of thought, personal idiosyncrasies, social or political compulsions. They reject any comparison between, say, the Biblical *Book of Proverbs* and a secular *Collection of Chinese Proverbs*, eventhough the latter may be at least as witty and wise (nowadays, many open-minded Christians do acknowledge the value of this human wisdom and the historicity of their Scriptures, but in making this concession to common sense, they effectively sacrifice the pretence of Revelation as the source of their religion). The opposite approach is that of the *Philosophia Perennis*, the *Sanatana Dharma*: there is an eternal wisdom, in which we all participate to the extent that we rise above ignorance. That is why the Buddha claimed to teach "an ancient way": new things happen

[123] Kalupahana: *Buddhist Philosophy*, p.44-45.

only in the gossip columns, the fundamental truth is ancient and unchanging.

This does not exclude that discoveries are made. In human history, someone was the first to discover the use of fire, to invent the wheel, to formulate an ethical code, or to stumble upon the insight of the Self. In Indian religion too, important insights have been discovered for the first time by someone, mostly someone anonymous.

Dr. Ambedkar, while generously ascribing unique achievements to the Buddha, does acknowlegde the indebtedness of Buddha to earlier Hindu thinkers. Thus, he traces Buddha's rational approach, which he values so much, to Kapila, the founder of the *Samkhya-Darshana,* the "viewpoint" focusing on cosmology: "Among the ancient philosophers of India the most pre-eminent was Kapila... The tenets of his philosophy were of a startling nature. Truth must be supported by proof. This is the first tenet of the Samkhya system. There is no truth without proof. For purposes of proving the truth Kapila allowed only two means of proof — 1) perception, and 2) inference..."[124] To be sure, Dr. Ambedkar was not a specialist in Hindu philosophy, much less in the exact interconnectedness of the different Hindu schools of thought including Buddhism; but for those who think he was a first-class Hindu-baiter, it may be good to learn that he paid the highest respect to a pre-Buddhist Hindu philosopher like Kapila.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, Kapila is the source of one of Buddhism's most fundamental concepts, causality, and also of the related Buddhist rejection of the belief in a personal Creator of the universe: "His next tenet related to causality — creation and its cause. Kapila denied the theory that there was a being who created the universe." Kapila's arguments are listed, and the last one introduces yet another fundamental concept of Buddhism: suffering (*dukkha*). It is brought in from an unusual angle: "Kapila argued that the process of development of the unevolved is through the activities of three constituents of which it is made up, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. These are called three Gunas. [Sattva is] light in nature, which reveals, which causes pleasure to men; [Rajas is] what impels and moves, what produces activity; [Tamas is] what is heavy and puts under restraint, what produces the state of indifference or inactivity... When the three Gunas are in perfect balance,

[124] Dr. Ambedkar: *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, book 1, part 5, para 2.

none overpowering the other, the universe appears static (achetan) and ceases to evolve. When the three Gunas are not in balance, one overpowers the other, the universe becomes dynamic (sachetan) and evolution begins. Asked why the Gunas become unbalanced, the answer which Kapila gave was that this disturbance in the balance of the three Gunas was due to the presence of Dukkha (suffering)."[125]

Buddhism is quite close to the Samkhya-Yoga viewpoint: to Samkhya for its intellectual framework (as Jainism is akin to Nyaya-Vaisheshika), to Yoga for its method. Yet, many sectarian Buddhists claim that the Buddha had first studied with two yogis, Arada Kalam and Uddaka Ramaputta, and had left them in utter dissatisfaction to go and invent a totally new system. This is typically talk of "followers", of people who have never done any searching themselves: in real life, discarding everything you have learned and building something totally new from scratch is something that just does not exist. Most people of calibre will disagree with their teachers one day, then go out and explore alternatives; but there is no doubt that they take with them what they have learned.

In Dr. Ambedkar's narrative of the Buddha's career, we read that one of the practices taught by Arada Kalam in his Dhyana Marga (path of meditation) was the observation of the breathing-process (Anapanasati)[126]; till today, this is one of the first practices which a student of Buddhist meditation will get to do. Alright, the Buddha thought that their teaching did not go far enough, and so he went out and took it further. But all the same, he built on what he had learned from others, as we all do (except those who don't build anything at all), and so a lot in Buddhism is older than Buddhism. The Buddha rejected some of the things he had learned, such as unnatural breathing exercises and extreme asceticism. But then, he adopted so many things that were already quite common, like his elementary ethical prescriptions (*panchasheela*: truthfulness, non-violence, non-stealing, chastity, non-acquisitiveness); the notion that *prajna* and *sheela*, wisdom and right conduct are equally necessary, which was described to him in so many words by a Brahmin as the essence of Brahminhood; the notion that desire clouds our vision and is to be stopped.

This, according to Dr. Ambedkar, is what the Buddha was

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[125] *ibid.*
[126] *op.cit.* 1:3:3.

doing under the Bodhi tree after four weeks of a meditation that was to have a deep effect on world religious history: "Gautama when he sat in meditation for getting new light was greatly in the grip of the Samkhya philosophy. That suffering and unhappiness in the world he thought was an incontrovertible fact. Gautama was, however, interested in knowing how to do away with suffering. This problem the Sankhya philosophy did not deal with."[127] This is indeed the way human progress is normally made: your master has taken you this far, and from here you take another step according to your own insight. It is a different matter whether the method of liberation from suffering which the Buddha developed and taught, was all that new.

What is relatively original in Buddhism, is the systematic exposition of ideas which are scattered around in the Upanishads. There had been earlier systematizers, and of many we do not know the exact date anyway. The Patanjali of the Yoga Sutras is usually considered post-Buddhist, but he was clearly a compiler of an older tradition, which may well be pre-Buddhist. We do not know whether this systematicity in Buddhist doctrine is the work of Buddha himself. By the time the doctrine was codified into the corpus that has come down to our own time, generations of monks had already been working on the doctrine. In my opinion, the success of Buddhism is not merely due to the contents of the doctrine (though its moderation gave it a natural advantage over Jain extremism), but, apart from state patronage, to its unprecedented organization. Like the Jesuits, the Buddhists monks constituted an intellectual army.

The following items are usually taken as uniquely Buddhist contributions and as fundamental points of difference: the doctrine of non-violence (*ahimsa*), and the doctrine of non-Self.

The doctrine of non-violence definitely precedes Buddhism by centuries. It is in the Mahabharata (core text reasonably dated to 14th century BC) that we find the famous formula: *Ahimsa paramo dharmah*, "non-violence is the highest value/norm/duty/religion". Then already, vegetarianism was a central application of the Ahimsa doctrine: the Mahabharata (*Anushasan Parva* 115:59-67) discusses 18 kings who have banned meat-eating and lists 30 kings who have refrained from taking meat themselves. The Iranian re-

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[127] *ibid.* 1:4:3.

former Zarathustra already seemed to be preaching non-violence (towards people, towards the cow, towards Mother Earth) centuries before the Buddha, and he was only one spokesman of a trend that was catching on in many centres of Aryan culture. The most extreme form of Ahimsa, losing all sense of proportion, was to be found in Jainism, a tradition which on its own admission is much older than its so-called founder Mahavira Jina, a contemporary of the Buddha.

To be sure, the *ahimsa* motive in this trend is more complex than we moderns might think. It is mixed with a new concept of purity: vegetarianism not only avoids killing, it also avoids taking dying substances into your body; and Zarathustra's prohibition of animal sacrifice not only avoided killing the animal victim, but also kept the sacred fire pure from the defilement which a dying victim brings. *Ahimsa* has a ritual and even a kind of hygienical aspect apart from its ethical aspect of compassion for all sentient beings. On the whole, both the ethical and the ritual valuation of *ahimsa* seem to be a consequence of the spread of yogic practices, which develop people's sensitivity.

Moving closer to the thought current to which Buddha is most closely related, we find various notions of *ahimsa* in the Upanishads. John G. Arapura mentions "an important but apposite passage in the Brihadaranyakopanishad (5:2:1-3), which uses three da-based expressions: damyata (have self-control), datta (give), dayadhvam (have compassion). The foundations for formulating *ahimsa* as positive compassion (*daya*) have been laid here. There are good reasons for believing that this and other Upanishadic texts pre-date Buddha and Mahavira, so that the grounds of their insight have already been laid."[128]

Th Chandogya Upanishad mentions *ahimsa* in several places, one of them being a list of virtues to be practised, including asceticism (*tapas*), generosity (*danam*), uprightness (*arjavam*) and truth-speaking (*satya-vachanam*): these virtues are more efficacious for the sacrifice than the fees given to the priests. Here, we are already close to the Buddha's "five precepts", one of which is *ahimsa*.

Buddha, a latecomer on this scene, prescribed *ahimsa* as one of the rules to which his followers should adhere. But he did not

[128] John G. Arapura: "Ahimsa in Basic Hindu Scriptures", *Journal of Dharma*, 1991/3, p.197-210, spec. p.199-200.

introduce it in secular affairs, the way Mahatma Gandhi introduced it as a technique of moral and political pressure. He never said that it was better to get killed than to kill; he simply stayed away from secular situations where killing took place. It is related several times that a king on his way to the hunting-ground or the battlefield takes the occasion to meet Buddha, but never does Buddha admonish him to cancel his violent programme. Nor did he prescribe strict vegetarianism to his monks, because "beggars can't be choosers" and have to accept what generous laymen, even butchers, offer them. On the other hand, "right livelihood", one of the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path, is definitely an injunction against professions in which the rules of conduct (truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity, non-acquisitiveness and indeed non-violence) are systematically violated.

On the whole, we can say that Buddha saw non-violence as a condition for his spiritual path, but not as a new law with which to govern the world; governing the world was a business which he as a prince had abandoned when he took up the search for the truth. Moreover, he applied this principle with moderation, unlike the Jains who took it to absurd lengths.

In Buddhist history, we don't see non-violence interfere with the normal exercise of power. Buddhist kings have not felt constrained to non-violence when it came to repelling invaders, and some have even waged wars of conquest. Much has been made of Ashoka's "conversion" after the slaughter in the Kalinga war. Indeed, Ashoka forbade the killing and mutilation of specified animals in specified periods; but fact is that even after his conversion, he used ruthless policing methods to keep the empire under his control. Meanwhile it is still a matter of debate whether Ashoka was really a Buddhist (just as it is debated whether Emperor Constantine was really a convert to Christianity): his references to Dharma may have a broader meaning, and his reverence for things Buddhist may simply have been part of the larger Hindu attitude, like that of the Shaiva king Harsha who looked well after Bodh Gaya. It is merely certain that Ashoka extended considerable state patronage to Buddhist institutions.

Buddhism started as a Kshatriya religion and it has remained just that. In Japan, the Samurai class found in Zen Buddhism the best psychological basis for a life on the brink of death, a life of total obedience to the master who could send his men into slaugh-

ter and suicide operations at any time. On the other hand, in the 1930s there was an anti-war movement with Buddhist inspiration in Japan, which included famous martial arts masters (as well as the founder of the macrobiotics health system); but that was after secular developments had finished off the samurai as a class and transformed the martial arts into an aesthetic and spiritual discipline without secular relevance. In general, Buddhist non-violence remained an optional discipline for spiritual seekers and seldom interfered with the way of the world.

It is therefore too simplistic, if not simply untruthful, to say that Buddhism robbed India of its fighting capability by imposing non-violence. Even Jainism with its more extreme concept of non-violence has been the adopted religion of kings who were as harsh and aggressive as any. The solid tradition of Hindu secularism has meant that rulers were left to practise the duty of the ruler, which could well include the use of force, as well as amorous pursuits and other activities not befitting the monk.

The only thing that can be held against Buddhism and Jainism is their general orientation of world-negation, of renunciation of duties. Much of this attitude was given official sanction in Hinduism by Shankaracharya, the alleged crypto-Buddhist, who rejected worldly involvement as a sign of ignorance and a loss of oneself in an illusion (*maya*). While not directly responsible for any actual decisions affecting India's preparedness for war with the Islamic attackers, the over-emphasis on renunciation may have contributed to an atmosphere in which the art of warfare got sufficiently neglected to give the militarized Islamic states the opportunity to conquer most of India. Then again, one can also blame the complacency which is bound to grow in a cultured and prosperous country, and which needed no inspiration from a spiritual doctrine.

The most important point of Buddhist doctrine which is claimed to constitute a radical departure from Hinduism, is the notion that there is no Self. The doctrine of non-Self, upon which so much Buddhist extolment and Hindu depreciation has been built, is not fundamentally different from the earlier Upanishadic doctrine of Self. The Self is characterized in the Upanishads as neither black nor white, neither big nor small, neither this nor that, *neti neti*. The Self is *nirguna*, without characteristics. The Buddhist non-Self, or emptiness, can equally not be characterized as black or white, big or small, this or that. By definition, the con-

scious subject, or Self, is receptive to contents but different from any of these possible contents: it has this in common with empty space, it is emptiness.

While Self and non-Self may be given a formally different definition, they are materially the same thing, and can be realized through the same yogic methods, presupposing the same code of conduct. Any differences are part of a metaphysical superstructure, precisely the speculative accretion which Buddha considered a useless distraction from the path of meditative practice. The difference between Self and non-Self is the same as the difference between plus zero (+0) and minus zero (-0), viz. zero.

It is only the intellectual construction built around the experience which is the goal and essence of Buddhism as well as of Vedanta, that is different in the two traditions. Buddhism gives a negative, Vedanta a positive formulation. While we can maintain that the experience sought and the method employed is not substantially different, the intellectual construction around the *sadhana* is indeed remarkably divergent. Not only the opposition between Self and non-Self as the end of the *sadhana*, but the very motivation that constitutes the starting-point of the search seems radically different.

The Upanishadic teachers are rooted firmly in the Vedic (and broadly pan-Indo-European) tradition centred on the notion of *Satya*, truth. Their motive for taking some time off worldly pursuits and directing consciousness inside towards the experience of *Atma*, the Self, is simply that this way, the Self gains true knowledge concerning it-Self. Most of the time, the Self is directed outward and identifying with sensorial or mental objects, not realizing its own nature; when directed inwards, it gains truthful awareness of its own nature. The search for ultimate consciousness needs no further justification: truth is the ultimate value.

By contrast, Buddhism takes as its starting-point the experience of *Dukkha*, suffering. Buddhist meditation practice starts as an attempt to neutralize the cause of suffering, identified as desire. Here, the need to undo the experience of suffering justifies the search for ultimate consciousness. The Upanishads start with what to achieve, with a positive vision of the goal to be reached; Buddhism starts with a negative sense of displeasure, with what to get away from.

In Yoga and Vedanta, the mistaken consciousness, in which

the Self forgets itself because of identification with objects, is the problem, and the establishment of true consciousness is the solution. In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, this state is described with the technical term Kaivalya, "isolation", i.e. isolation of the Self from the objects in which it usually drowns itself. Yoga is a method defined in technical terms as: stopping the waves of the mind. The goal is: consciousness ("the seer") resting in itself. The condition before the goal is achieved, is described as: identification of consciousness with its objects. The goal is described in positive terms: true consciousness.

By contrast, in Buddhism the problem is defined as suffering, its cause as desire, and the solution as Nirvana, the blowing-out of desire. The goal is described in negative terms: originally the extinction of desire, in later philosophizing the realization of emptiness as the ultimate nature of reality. It is no wonder that Buddhism, with its negative starting-point, has a negatively defined goal.

It is paradoxical that the notion of non-Self, which implies that all entities have no permanent identity, is now being used to assert a separate identity for Buddhism. Vis-a-vis Sanatana Dharma, Buddhism does not have a separate identity, it is merely one of the forms thrown up by the same age-old inspiration. Comparing Buddhism with Hinduism is like comparing a leaf with its tree. If this is not liked by would-be Buddhist communalists, I may refer to the undisputed leader of Tibetan Buddhism, who took a clear stand in this unfortunate dispute about Buddhism's separate identity. Speaking in the context of the artificial Bodh Gaya dispute, the Dalai Lama said: "When I say that Buddhism is a part of Hinduism, certain people criticize me. But if I were to say that Hinduism and Buddhism are totally different, it would not be in conformity with truth."[129]

5.12. Conclusion

Dr. Ambedkar was a complex personality, not fit for simple glorification, nor of course for vilification. Undoubtedly, he was a very strong man, who stood his ground, and who rendered sterling services to the nation. On his intellectual achievements, our judgment will be more diversified.

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[129] Interview in *Organiser*, 22/11/1992. The relationship between these two schools of Sanatana Dharma has been discussed in depth in Ram Swarup, *Buddhism vis-a-vis Hinduism*, revised edition, Voice of India, 1984.

When dealing with straighforward problems like social injustice and Islam, he had a clear and generally correct judgment. On the complex history of and problems before Hinduism, his judgment was sometimes rash and sweeping. He was essentially a Western-educated man, and had imbibed some of the condescending incomprehension so typical of westernized Natives. Yet, among this class of Western-educated Indians, there is hardly any who has to such extent freed himself from pervasive prejudices and fashionable beliefs, such as the claim of a racial basis of caste. Because he himself had suffered the humiliation which many caste Hindus kept on inflicting on the untouchables, it is not abnormal that he was intemperately bitter against Hinduism. Nevertheless, he remained loyal to Hinduism in the broad sense, and rejected eager offers to take his followers into mass conversion to soul-greedy and imperialist religions.

If we have uttered some criticism of his intellectual shortcomings regarding specific subjects, we could do so in a spirit of respect because we are also aware of his substantial intellectual qualities and merits, apart from his well-known political achievements for his country and his community. As an independent thinker, Dr. Ambedkar contrasts brightly with wind-bags like M.N. Roy and Jawaharlal Nehru, whose parrotting of fashionable slogans has not prevented them from remaining trendsetters for the secularist elite which is still ruling India. If he was not perfect in every respect, we would say that there is only so much which a man can do in a lifetime, so if a busy politician could not always find the time to seek out all the historical facts about complex subjects, it is really not abnormal.

Budddha was a human being who specialized in one discipline, viz. spiritual liberation. In his chosen field, he became a master, and the school he founded has unique achievements to its credit in mapping the space of consciousness and refining the discipline of liberation. However, like any human being he had to sacrifice other interests in order to concentrate on his true vocation, so he abandoned his position as a Kshatriya, a guardian of the social order: he withdrew his attention from all social considerations except in so far as they had an effect on the spiritual discipline. In order to be the Buddha, Gautama renounced all involvement in worldly matters such as the social order. Dr. Ambedkar, like the Brahmins, considered this exclusive concern for spiritual

liberation unsatisfactory, and wanted to give the other dimensions of life (*purusharthas*) their due. So he supplied Buddhism with a social philosophy of his own making (on the basis of modern Western thought), which he subsequently tried to give roots in certain original doctrinal aspects of Buddhism, such as its supposed rationalism. Dr. Ambedkar would agree that the Buddha was a human being, not a unique divine person but a guide who has gone the way which is potentially universally human. Guides come and go, but the land they show is always there, *sanatana*.

Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism has highlighted once more the intimate relation between Buddhism and the other schools of Hinduism. There is no point in labelling Buddhists as Hindus against their will, the need of the hour is rather to get serious about the essence of Hinduism, the essence of Buddhism, and if the two are really the same, then the practitioners are bound to discover that for themselves.

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Christianity is more complicated, because my own relation with it is more complex, and because Christianity itself is a more complex doctrine and movement than Islam. However, Christianity in India is not the toothless, softened Christianity which I am familiar with, but has retained the aggressiveness and self-righteousness of the colonial period; and even the European Churches become a little bit aggressive again when advertising their work among the wretched Pagans of India. Therefore, I see no reason to mince words and to spare the Christian establishment when it comes to exposing its divisive and subversive role.

Nowadays, most writings on the religio-political situation in India contain comparisons of contemporary phenomena with Nazism and Fascism. References to Hitler are a mighty weapon, an easy way to kill opponents in debate, and to kill debate itself. As it is, in this book I have myself compared some movements with Nazism, some people with Hitler. I have not, as happens too often, reduced them to *only* this Nazi-like aspect which I claim to perceive in them; but even then, the comparison is bound to have a disproportionate rhetorical power. At any rate, it is not me who started the inflation of Hitler comparisons and Nazi allegations which is hampering the debate on the Indian religio-political conflicts and social institutions. It is the enemies of Hindu society, and their poorly informed pupils, who have introduced this heavy and extreme terminology; they are not in a position to complain when they get a taste of their own medicine.

The topics dealt with in this book, from anti-Brahmanism to the continuity between Hindu and tribal culture, deserve a much more thorough study. Hindu scholars should come forward to investigate India's history anew, free from the anti-Hindu bias which has dominated the field for several centuries now. Hindu conceptual categories should be revaluated, Hindu sources of history should no longer be dismissed out of hand (the way the Puranas had been declared inadmissible). I hope this book will prove to be an encouragement for such fresh research.

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